A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF MIDDLE SCHOOL ALLITERATES

A Dissertation

Presented to

the School of Education

Drake University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

by Pamela S. Ries

July 2000

A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF MIDDLE SCHOOL ALLITERATES

by Pamela S. Ries

July 2000

Approved by Committee:

Pamela M. Curtiss

Catherine Wilson Gillespie

Phyllis Staplin

Jamie Ferrare
Dean of the School of Education

A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF MIDDLE SCHOOL ALLITERATES

An abstract of a Dissertation by
Pamela S. Ries
July 2000
Drake University
Advisor: Pamela K. Curtiss

The Problem. The problem of this study is to identify why, according to the perspective of middle school alliterates, students who are capable of reading choose not to read.

Procedures. The research was conducted using qualitative methodology. Subjects of this study were seventh and eighth grade students at a central Iowa middle school. The *Motivation to Read Profile* was used to identify capable readers who chose not to read. Data were collected through student reading logs, semi-structured interviews, open-ended questionnaires, follow-up interviews, and field notes. The data were analyzed using constant comparative methodology.

Findings. Five themes evolved from analysis of the subjects' responses concerning why they choose not to read. These five themes included freedom of selection, time allocation, peer relationships, reading attitudes, and reading habits.

Conclusions. This study yielded four conclusions. (a) Students do not necessarily read outside of school. (b) Middle school students say they need more freedom of selection in what they read, what format they use to read, and in how they spend their time. (c) Middle school students opt to spend time with their peers in organized or informal activities. (d) Middle school students' reading attitudes are reflected in their reading habits.

Recommendations. The following implications emerged from a review of the literature and findings from this study. (a) Educators may consider providing students with freedom to select reading content and formats, in how they spend their time, and with whom they work. (b) Students need time to get into the "flow" of academic engagement. Educators may wish to reorganize how students spend time in school. (c) Students appear to learn more when they work collegially. Educators may want to explore options for multi-generational pairings. (d) Educators may benefit from professional development opportunities focused on philosophical innovations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project is dedicated to the memory of my grandmother, Mona Ann Jones Windsor, who taught me to do whatever needed to be done. She was the original "Just do it!" gal. Her strength and compassion and determination to live life her way continue to be my inspiration.

I would like to thank the administrators, teachers, and students of the Centerville School District for their support throughout this project. Bob King knows more about any student in that district than anyone can imagine and he can produce the statistics to prove it. The Howar Junior High staff was willing to help in anyway possible and went out of their way to help me access the data I needed for this project. The students were courteous, cooperative, and willing to answer a nosy, old lady's questions. Thank you for putting up with me.

From the beginning of our relationship, Pam Curtiss has been my advocate, my cheerleader, my guide, my mentor, and my toughest critic. For seeing me through to the completion of this project you have my unending gratitude and respect. For holding me to high standards and pushing me to do better I thank you.

I never would have tackled this project without the support of my husband, my friend, our own Mr. Mom, Paul. Without his encouragement and willingness to sacrifice this project would have never gotten off the starting block. Thank you and I love you.

Aaron, Amber, and Adam, our children, have been real troopers throughout this proceeding. They have put up with a mom who doesn't cook and couldn't always play cards, take them to town, or watch a movie. They have learned to vacuum, do laundry, dishes and ironing, and seemed to understand when Mom retreated to her room. I hope you have learned to persevere in order to reach a worthwhile goal, by living through this experience with me. I appreciate your support and I love each of you.

I have always felt the support of my family from across the miles that separate us. It is great to feel loved. Thank you. I have felt the support of my employers and co-workers throughout this process. Thank you for being patient with me and allowing me the freedom to pursue this degree.

It takes a village to raise a child **or** to complete a dissertation. Without the assistance of countless friends and neighbors who willingly "adopted" my children as surrogate parents, and worked in my place on committees or in concession stands, this project could not have been completed. I owe each of you a debt that can never be repaid. A special thank you goes to Susie Johnston, a very special friend.

Thank you one and all!

Table of Contents

Chapter		Page
1.	INTRODUCTION	1
	Context	1
	Purpose/Importance of the Study	10
	Problem Statement and Research Questions	11
	Methodology	13
	Delimitations	13
	Overview of the Study	14
	Definition of Terms	14
2.	LITERATURE REVIEW	17
	An Overview of Reading	17
	The Middle School Philosophy	19
	Middle School Students	24
	Motivation	38
	Summary	43
3.	METHOD	45
	Subjects and Selection Procedures	46
	Data Sources	50
	Data Analysis	56

Reporting 59
Trustworthiness 59
4. ANALYSIS OF THE DATA 63
Themes 73
Freedom of Selection 73
Time Allocation 85
Peer Relationships 94
Reading Attitudes 96
Reading Habits 105
Closing 109
5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS 110
Discussion 110
Conclusions 118
Implications 121
Suggestions for Teachers or Adults 125
Recommendations for Further Research 130
References 133
Appendixes 149
A. Motivation to Read Profile 150
B. Additional Items 153
C. Human Subjects Research Review 154

D. Motivation to Read Profile 158

E. My conversational Interview 160

Chapter 1

"Reading is essential to success in our society. The ability to read is highly valued and important for social and economic advancement." So begins the Executive Summary of the committee on the Prevention of Reading Difficulties in Young Children (National Research Council, 1998, p.1). The federal government has supported the concept of improving the reading ability of all students by funding the Title 1 and special education programs. Nationally sponsored reports decry the decline of students' reading abilities. National and state school improvement issues center around the development of reading standards aimed at improving students' reading achievement. But despite the widespread emphasis placed upon improving students' reading, many of our middle school youth choose not to read.

Context

During the last decades, a number of philosophical innovations have been submitted to the educational arena of debate as possible "answers" to the ongoing question: How can educators best help students learn? The middle school philosophy, cognitive constructivism, and whole language are three of the innovations that impacted this study. The promise of each innovation is that revolutionalizing the educational system around the philosophies of these innovations will allow all children to reach their maximum learning potential, which will in turn allow them to fulfill their civic responsibilities as informed citizens.

During the last 20 to 25 years, the middle school philosophy, cognitive constructivism, and whole language have each been embraced by a variety of teachers, buildings, districts, and even states throughout our nation. To understand the perspectives of today's students we must understand the philosophies upon which their educational experiences have been built. Each of these philosophical innovations has been implemented in the belief that doing so will improve the probability that all students will be more likely to learn the skills they need to become productive members of our society. I have included a brief summary of the major constructs of these philosophical innovations.

The Middle School Concept

The middle school concept is an educational philosophy that focuses on creating a student-centered curriculum designed to meet the unique social, emotional, and academic developmental needs of the transescent student. Eichhorn (1966) created the term "transescent" to identify the characteristics unique to the 10 to 14 year old students attending a middle school. The middle school concept is built upon the recognition and appreciation of the distinctive qualities of this age group. These students are neither small high school students nor overgrown elementary students. They are neither children nor adolescents. They seem to have one foot in each of these worlds while the trunk of their body is in a state of limbo.

Every facet of the lives of these young people is undergoing change. The physical changes are the most obvious, but these young people are also

changing socially, emotionally, and intellectually. To complicate the picture further, not all transescents begin to experience these changes at the same time or proceed through the process at the same rate. You are likely to find a 13 year old boy sitting in the same class with a twelve year old girl. The boy is not yet five feet tall and likes to play with action figures. The girl is six feet tall, physically and emotionally blooming, and likes love songs and 'hanging out with friends'. The diverse needs of these learners are best met within a student-centered, developmentally appropriate environment where one size does not fit all. There are multiple paths for each student to follow in their journey toward independence.

Gibson (1978) identified the following differences between the traditional junior high school and a middle school. The differences involve a shift in emphasis in several areas. The emphasis shifts from preparing the child for senior high school to approaching the child "as an individual whose chronological age is characterized by unique problems of coping with changing bodies, changing interests, and changing personal relationships" (p. 18). To accommodate that emphasis shift, rigid requirements met by rigid scheduling is abandoned in favor of "an organizational flexibility within an environment that is sensitive to changing needs" (p. 18). A child-centered curriculum is utilized, as opposed to a subject-centered curriculum, to accommodate the shift from "mastery of knowledge to utilization of knowledge" (p. 18). At the heart of the

shift from the junior high concept to the middle school concept is "recognition of the need to strengthen the self-concept of the individual" (p. 18).

Transescents require a curriculum built upon "certain conditions, factors, and programmatic characteristics that are identifiable and are present in a true middle school" (Lounsbury, 1982, p. 10). These "essential elements" include: (a) educators who are knowledgeable about and committed to transescents, (b) a balanced curriculum based on transescent needs, (c) a range of organizational arrangements, (d) varied instructional strategies, (e) a full exploratory program, (f) comprehensive advising and counseling, (g) continuous progress for students, (h) evaluation procedures compatible with the nature of transescents, (i) cooperative planning, and (j) positive school climate (Lounsbury, 1982, pp. 10-16).

In the adoption of the middle school philosophy, the role of the teacher is that of a facilitator who actively engages students in their own learning. Students create their own understanding through engagement with new material or at least material seen in a new way. Teachers learn to develop activities based upon students' strengths. Mistakes are seen as a necessary part of the learning process. Collaboration is regarded as an integral component of the whole language classroom.

> We realized that learning must involve collaboration–collaboration between students and teachers, between students and published authors, between writers and readers, and among students themselves. (Newman, 1985, pp. 3-4)

Daniels, Zemelman, and Bizar (1999) reviewed sixty years of research on the middle school philosophy and found the following recommended teaching strategies: (a) structuring independent reading and writing, (b) embedding literacy activities in broad interdisciplinary themes, (c) stressing higher-order thinking, (d) teaching multiple cuing systems for decoding unknown words; holding regular teacher-student conferences, (e) organizing students into collaborative groups, (f) teaching writing as a staged process, (g) teaching grammar in the context of students' own writing, (h) substituting coaching and modeling for red-penciling children's errors, (i) encouraging student goal setting and self-assessment, involving students and parents in literacy homework activities, and (j) using the teacher as a model of adult literacy (p. 32).

Cognitive Constructivism

Based on the work of Dewey and Piaget, cognitive constructivism is defined as "a theory of learning that describes the central role that learners' mental schemes play in their cognitive growth" (Brooks & Brooks, 1999, p. 18). McBrien and Brandt (1997) expanded upon this definition by suggesting that constructivism is "an approach to teaching based on research about how people learn. . . . Each individual 'constructs' knowledge instead of receiving it from others. . . . Active, hands-on learning during which students are encouraged to think and explain their reasoning" (p. 141) best encourages this construction of knowledge.

The constructivist views education as a very individual endeavor. New knowledge is created by making connections to previous experiences. Therefore, no two people create the exact same knowledge, even if they are simultaneously exposed to the same experience. Assessment techniques must then allow for "students to express their personal understanding of concepts in ways that are uniquely theirs" (Holloway, 1999, p. 85).

Cognitive constructivism is not a way of teaching. Rather, it is a philosophy of learning. A constructivist classroom will not look the same as a more traditional classroom. The differences from one class to the next will depend upon students' experiences, abilities, and needs. Perkins (1999) views constructivism as "a toolbox for problems of learning. . . . If a particular approach does not solve the problem, try another–more structured, less structured, more discovery oriented, less discovery oriented, whatever works" (p. 11).

Whole Language

Whole language is an educational philosophy that is student-centered and focuses on helping the student acquire literacy skills through authentic literacy experiences. It is consistent with the constructivist philosophy and the middle school philosophy. There is no one method of teaching that is whole language. Whole language is a philosophy that centers on helping the student become an independent reader and writer, capable of employing a variety of literacy strategies based upon the needs of the situation.

Goodman (1986) summarized whole language in the following way: (a) Whole language learning builds around whole learners learning whole language in whole situations. (b) Whole language learning assumes respect for language, for the learner, and for the teacher. (c) The focus is on meaning and not on language itself, in authentic speech and literacy events. (d) Learners are encouraged to take risks and invited to use language, in all its varieties, for their own purposes. (e) In a whole language classroom, all the varied functions of oral and written language are appropriate and encouraged (p. 40).

The whole language philosophy of teaching has many variations. Daniels et al. (1999) reviewed sixty years of research and found the following strategies common to all: (a) using classic children's literature, (b) structuring independent reading and writing, (c) embedding literacy activities in broad interdisciplinary themes, (d) stressing higher-order thinking, (e) teaching multiple cuing systems for decoding unknown words, (f) holding regular teacher-student conferences, (g) organizing students into collaborative groups, (h) teaching writing as a staged process, (i) teaching grammar and correctness in the context of students' own writing, (j) substituting coaching and modeling for red-penciling children's errors, (k) encouraging student goal setting and self-assessment, (l) involving students and parents in literacy homework activities, (m) and using the teacher as a model of adult literacy (p. 32).

Historical Perspective

There is a long standing precedent in American history recognizing the importance of learning to read. In recent years leaders have acknowledged the need to foster the desire to read. In order to fully understand the current state of middle school reading education, it is necessary to understand the historical background of this topic.

In 1984, Daniel Boorstin (who was Librarian of Congress at the time), reported to Congress that "alliterates -- individuals who can read but choose not to do so -- constitute a threat at least equal to that of illiterates in a democratic tradition built on books and reading. . . . The practice or absence of voluntary reading will determine the extent of self-improvement and enlightenment, the ability to share wisdom and the delights of our civilization, and our capacity for intelligent self-government" (p. iv). "The ability to read and understand is essential to each citizen's informed and full participation in a democratic society. That literacy is crucial to the proper working of a democracy was espoused early on in this country's history" (Campbell, Donahue, Reese, & Phillips, 1996).

Civic responsibility

From the earliest history of our nation, American leaders recognized and acted upon the belief that a "democratic, moral, productive society depends on citizens who can and do read. . . . Thomas Jefferson spoke of "the security it [knowledge gained by reading] gives to liberty, by enlightening the minds of its citizens" (Peterson, 1984, p. 476). Schools are charged by American society

with the duty of teaching all students to read. But learning to read is only one part of the formula.

In other words, schools must teach all students not only how to read, but to read. Learning to read is only the beginning of the literacy picture. Capable readers must actually read if they are to fulfill their duties as informed citizens who participate fully in the democratic system, as defined by Jefferson.

Ten years ago, the President and the nation's Governors adopted six National Education Goals in an effort to increase educational performance at all levels. Goal #3, the Student Achievement and Citizenship goal, states that:

> By the year 2000, American students will leave grades four, eight, and twelve having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, history, and geography; and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our modern economy. (Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1992,p. 1)

Academic Achievement

Greaney (1980) suggested that "a number of studies have reported significant relationships between the amount of leisure reading and the level of pupil attainment." This claim was supported by McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth (1995) who found a link between academic achievement and reading attitude. Conner (1954) described that relationship as follows: "Good readers in contrast to poor readers, read more and [read] better quality reading material." Studies

with adults have indicated that the "level of educational attainment is related to the amount of reading" (Sharon, 1974, p.341). Campbell et al. (1996) concluded that students, at all three grade levels (fourth, eighth, and eleventh), who more frequently read recreationally had higher average reading proficiencies.

> Students who read a lot tend to be better readers than those who do not. . . . Students who find reading easy are more likely to read more than those who find reading difficult--it is also true that in reading, as in most things, practice tends to improve performance. Unfortunately, children do not appear to be reading more than in the past. Only half (54 percent) of all nine year olds reported that they 'read for fun' on their own time everyday. (p. 77)

These studies indicate that being able to read, but choosing not to read produces no better results in academic growth or informed citizenship than does a lack of reading ability. The end result in either case is a decrease in the rate of academic growth or the ability to make informed decisions.

Purpose/Importance of the Study

The purpose of this study was to contribute to a better understanding of why many middle school students who are capable of reading, choose not to read. Ley, Schaer, and Dismukes (1994) and Langer, Applebee, Mullis, and Foertsch (1990) documented declines in the amount of reading and attitudes toward reading at the middle school level. But an analysis of factors that might contribute to that decline does not exist. "There is fairly substantial evidence that as children move into early adolescence, they engage in less reading.

Unfortunately the reasons are not clear as to why this occurs" (Pikulski, 1991, p.310).

Little has been done to document the reflections of middle school reluctant readers. Unlike research at the middle school level, research has been completed with elementary aged reluctant readers (Palmer, Codling, & Gambrell, 1994), high school students (Moffitt & Wartella, 1992), and college students (Duchein & Mealey, 1993).

Most of the studies (Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1988; Rosenshine & Stevens, 1984; Denham & Lieberman, 1980) reporting on how children spend their time outside of school are 10-20 years old. During the past twenty years there are a multitude of influences (e.g., Nintendo, World Wide Web, increased access to athletic opportunities and/or shopping malls, changing family situations) that have been added to the repertoire of activities students may be engaged in during their out of school time. If students are not spending time reading, how are they spending their time? The research addressing this topic needs to be updated to reflect the technical and social changes of the last two decades. Therefore, there is a need to determine how today's middle school youth are spending their time outside of school. This study identifies the activities reluctant middle school readers say they spend their time doing.

Problem Statement and Research Questions

The problem addressed by this study is that despite the implementation of philosophical innovations, there are still students who are capable of reading but

choose not to read. If educators have effectively implemented the recent philosophical innovations (constructivism, the middle school concept, whole language) then we would expect that today's students would be more engaged in learning and would therefore read better and more than they did prior to the implementation of these innovations. Thus far, I have not been able to find research to document whether or not American middle school students read better or read more.

We do know that there are students who have the skills necessary to read, who feel confident in their ability to read, but still choose not to read. Johns (1978) called these students reluctant readers. Daniel Boorstin (1984) referred to them as alliterates. Why does Student A become alliterate while student B becomes an honor student? This we do not know. What is it that causes students to choose not to read? Do they have any common characteristics or experiences that might help explain this phenomenon?

Middle school educators increasingly realize that it is not enough to determine whether students are capable of reading. The more telling question is: Do students read? As Huck (as cited in Lehr, 1982) put it, "If we teach a child to read, yet develop not the taste for reading, all of our teaching is for naught. We shall have produced a nation of 'illiterate literates' -- those who know how to read, but do not read" (p.80). Estes (1971) suggested that "how students feel about reading is as important as whether they are able to read, for,

as is true for most abilities, the value of reading ability lies in its use rather than its possession" (p.135).

The following research question guided this study: Given the subject selections criteria, why do middle school students choose not to read? What factors impact whether or not they read?

Methodology

This study was based on qualitative methodology. Qualitative research is

> an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting. (Creswell, 1998, p.15)

Subjects of this study were seventh and eighth grade students at a central Iowa middle school who were identified, based on a survey, as being capable readers who chose not to read. The students were identified if they received an ability score of 26 or above and an attitude score of less than 20 on the Motivation to Read Profile. Community, school, and student characteristics will be discussed in Chapter 3.

Data were collected through: (a) student reading logs, (b) semi-structured interviews, (c) student questionnaires, (d) follow-up interviews, and (e) field notes. Constant comparative methodology was used to analyze the data.

Delimitations

The delimitations of this study were:

1.) The subjects of this study were bounded by their circumstances, thus reducing the generalizability of this study.

2.) The researcher brought a set of biases to the situation. Those biases influenced first the collection of the data and later the interpretation of the data.

3.) The Motivation to Read Profile (MRP) - Reading Scale (survey and interview) are self-reporting instruments.

4.) The students' perspectives were the only perspective obtained in this study.

Overview of the Study

In this chapter, the purpose and importance of the study were identified. A context for the study was presented. I identified the problem statement and research questions, methodology, and delimitations. A definition of terms germane to this study follows. Chapter 2 contains a review of the literature related to the themes identified in the data. Chapter 3 includes a review of qualitative research and describes the methodology utilized in this study. Chapter 4 reports the findings and the synthesized results of the collected data. Chapter 5 provides a summary, conclusions, a discussion of the study, and implications, along with recommendations for further study.

Definition of Terms

Alliterate: In this study, I defined students who are capable of reading, but choose not to read as being alliterate.

Cognitive Constructivism: I define cognitive constructivism as an educational philosophy built upon the belief that individuals construct knowledge based upon their previous experiences and the connections they make with new information. In the ideal constructivist world, all instruction/assessment is individualized by student and activity.

Middle School Concept: I define the middle school concept as an educational philosophy that focuses on meeting the individual academic, emotional, physical, and social needs of 10 to 14 year old students through a student-centered curriculum.

Middle School Students: I define middle school students as being seventh and eighth grade students.

MRP: I used the Motivation to Read Profile (see Appendix) by Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, and Mazzoni (1996). This instrument was used to identify students who are able to read, but choose not read.

Reading: In this study, reading refers to the process of identifying words (word recognition) and making meaning (comprehension) from the printed text. The goal of reading is to gain meaning from the printed text. That encompasses reading text from a variety of sources including books, magazines, newspapers, computer and television screens, and environmental print (text found within a person's daily life, e.g., signs, menus).

Traditional Reading Methods: I describe traditional reading methods as the literary program typically provided in a basal reading series. Skill lessons are

prescribed in the teacher's manual and are normally delivered and practiced in isolated activities, separate from the reading process.

Whole Language: I describe whole language as the educational philosophy embraced by constructivist teachers who structure learning experiences to provide students with a variety of literacy strategies. These learning experiences provide opportunities for students to engage language in authentic and holistic ways that encourage the development of literary independence.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Chapter 2 explores issues surrounding middle school students who are alliterate. First, an overview of reading is provided. Second, a review of the middle school philosophy and best practices in middle school pedagogy are described. Third, research concerning middle school student characteristics in the areas of physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development are included. Fourth, a review of the research on how adolescents allocate their time is provided. Included in this discussion are sections addressing reading achievement, reading attitude, and reading habits. Fifth, an overview of the research on motivation is delineated.

An Overview of Reading

Reading is one component of the language arts. Also included within the curriculum area of language arts is writing, speaking, and listening. Some researchers also include viewing and thinking in the reading area. Reading and writing as well as speaking and listening are considered to be concurrent components, which means that instruction in one area results in growth in the other area as well. The two areas generally have parallel development. Most people learn to listen and to speak automatically by being exposed to other people who are models of speech. However, people must be taught to read and to write (D'Arcangelo, 1999).

The reading process is frequently divided into several sub-areas, to accommodate a better understanding of the process. Areas of the reading process typically include decoding, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency. When students read, they begin by decoding or pronouncing the words. Knowing the meaning of the words is referred to as vocabulary knowledge. The rate at which the students pronounce the words, either orally or silently, determines their reading fluency. Comprehension is understanding what has been read. Valtin (1984) described learning to read as a three step process. The three steps include: (a) understanding the nature of reading and writing, e.g., that written language represents . . . speech; (b) grasping the alphabetic principle of our script; and (c) conscious and deliberate mastery of language (p. 256).

Researchers generally agree that those are the components that need to be taught, but they disagree about how to best teach these components. Flesch (1981), Copperman (1978), and Chall (1967) argued that phonics instruction is the foundation upon which reading is built. The curriculum they proposed begins by teaching students the letter-sound relationships, moving from small parts to the whole word. The belief is that "the child with decoding skills will easily transfer this skill and preexisting language to printed materials" (Calfee & Drum, 1986, p. 812).

The whole language approach contends that meaning is the goal of reading and decoding is a secondary or supportive skill used to allow the child to

obtain meaning from the written text. This approach builds upon the student's knowledge of how the language works. "Expose the child to good literature, help the child to find meaning, and let decoding take care of itself" (Calfee & Drum, 1986, p. 812) or be dealt with as the need arises. Bettelheim and Zelan (1982), Goodman and Goodman (1979), and Smith (1976) support this approach.

The debate continues today. Now the focus among researchers has shifted to calling for a balanced approach to the teaching of reading (D'Arcangelo, 1999; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; and Matson, 1996). "Today's programs. . . are balanced, comprehensive programs that include phonologic awareness, phonics, literature, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension-strategy components" (D'Arcangelo, 1999, p. 29). These are the components of a whole language program.

The Middle School Philosophy

The middle school concept is a philosophy that permeates all aspects of a school. Effective middle schools focus on addressing each individual's unique needs, both academic and emotional. Differences are viewed as opportunities rather than liabilities.

Middle school students are treasured for their own unique developmental stage. In the literature they are not viewed as older elementary students or young high school students. Their curriculum is designed to allow them to explore who they are and what they can become. Middle school teachers whose philosophical underpinnings match this concept organize themselves into

interdisciplinary teams that share common planning times and coordinate integrated lessons. Teachers and students together build learning communities that allow them to get to know one another as individuals and as part of a team.

The middle schools described in today's literature vary greatly from the secondary experiences of early Americans. The need to provide different aged students with different types of experiences has been recognized since at least 1893. But history suggests that committee recommendations identifying best practices do not insure that classroom practices will change accordingly. A brief summary of the evolution of the best practices in early adolescent education follows.

Historical Overview of Middle School Evolution

In 1893, the Committee of Ten on Secondary School Studies recommended that schools be reorganized to include six years of elementary school and six years of secondary education. This recommendation was debated for 20 years before the Committee on Economy of Time in Education in 1913 suggested the formation of a separate junior division of secondary education. The junior high was designed to "provide continued work in learning skills while bringing more depth to the curriculum than had been the case in the elementary schools. . . . It would emphasize guidance and exploration, independence and responsibility" (George, Stevenson, Thomason, & Beane, 1992, p.3).

In 1947, Gruhn and Douglass proposed six major functions of a junior high school. These functions included: (a) integration, (b) exploration, (c) guidance, (d) differentiation, (e) socialization, and (f) articulation. Today's best practices in the middle school concept include these same functions.

By 1960, 80 percent of the high school graduates in the United States had been through the elementary, junior high, senior high organization (Alexander & McEwin, 1989). During this same time, junior highs typically moved away from their philosophical origins and became little high schools organizationally and in program. In 1961, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) published *the Junior High School We Need* (Grantes, Noyce, Patterson, & Robertson, 1961) which described the ideal junior high as a place of "moderate size, block-of-time instruction, flexible scheduling, teachers prepared for and devoted to teaching young adolescents, and modern instructional techniques" (p. 19). The gap between the ideal and reality in American junior high schools was glaring (George et al., 1992, p. 5). The cry for reform was strong. Before the cry for junior high reform could be answered, the middle school was born, in part to answer social goals.

"In the twenty-year period from 1970 to 1990, the total number of traditional junior high schools (grades 7 - 9) declined by about 53 percent while the total number of middle schools (grades 5 or 6 through 8) increased by over 200 percent" (Alexander & McEwin, 1989, p. 10). The middle schools were often born of the administrative need to desegregate a school system or in response

to declining secondary population and increasing elementary populations. Moving students from one building to another helped to even out the numerical and/or racial distribution of students. Unfortunately, the focus of reorganizing stopped once the students were physically moved from one building to another. Few resources were allocated toward long term program changes. "Consequently, far too many of the new schools were middle schools solely in name and grade level" (George et al., 1992, p. 8).

In 1982, the National Middle School Association (NMSA) published a position paper entitled, *This We Believe*. Included in the document were ten "essential elements of a 'true middle school'". These elements included: (a) educators knowledgeable about and committed to young adolescents, (b) a balanced curriculum based on student needs, (c) a range of organizational arrangements, (d) varied instructional strategies, (e) a full exploratory program, (f) comprehensive advising and counseling, (g) continuous progress for students, (h) evaluation procedures compatible with the nature of young adolescents, (i) cooperative planning, and (j) positive school climate (Lounsbury, 1982, pp.10-15).

In a national survey, Alexander and McEwin (1989) found that some districts were embracing the middle school concept. True changes in organizational structures and curriculum were taking place. Interdisciplinary teams had been formed, advisor-advisee programs had been established, and leaders provided a rationale for middle school implementation that centered on

student characteristics and needs, rather than administrative expediency. At best though, these changes in focus were reportedly implemented in approximately one third of the existing middle schools.

Characteristics of an Effective Middle School

The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989) published *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century.* This report made recommendations concerning what was needed to improve the education of young adolescents. The recommendations included: (a) create small communities for learning, (b) teach a core academic program, (c) ensure success for all students, (d) empower teachers and administrators to make decisions about the experiences of middle grade students, (e) staff middle grade schools with teachers who are expert at teaching young adolescents, (f) improve academic performance through fostering the health and fitness of young adolescents, (g) re-engage families in the education of young adolescents, and (h) connect schools with communities.

A more recent list of characteristics found in an effective middle school appeared in the 1995 publication of the National Middle School Association. This position paper identified the following six conditions or characteristics that developmentally responsive middle schools should include: (a) educators committed to young adolescents, (b) a shared vision, (c) high expectations for all, (d) an adult advocate for every student, (e) family and community partnerships, and (f) a positive school climate.

The report continued with six program recommendations to promote maximum student learning. Those program areas are identified as: (a) curriculum that is challenging, integrative, and exploratory; (b) varied teaching and learning approaches; (c) assessment and evaluation that promote learning; (d) flexible organizational structures; (e) programs and policies that foster health, wellness, and safety; and (f) comprehensive guidance and support services.

Stiggins (1997) asserted that all teachers must be knowledgeable in their field to be effective teachers. This concept is aligned with the earlier recommendations for effective middle schools. Stiggins defined knowledgeable as "being able to understand it [the subject matter] inside and out" (p. 61). In the context of this study, it is important that teachers know what quality literature is available and how students can access that literature. Unfortunately, this is not the reality of many of our schools. Fry and Jobe (1996), surveyed 95 principals in Texas middle schools and found that "staffing by teachers who are knowledgeable and committed to the middle school student was considered very important by 92.2% of the principals, but was fully realized in only 16.9 percent of their schools" (p. 36).

Middle School Students

The one constant about the early adolescent years is that there will be change. Atwell (1998) stated that "twelve-, thirteen-, and fourteen-year-olds, are in the middle of everything, especially in the middle of changes–emotional, physical, psychological, and intellectual" (p. 55) changes. Atwell (1998)

observed that middle school students "shuttle back and forth between everything" (p. 56) . . . naivete' and world-weariness, self-confidence and self-doubting, responsibility and forgetfulness. They have "an increasing desire for autonomy, particularly autonomy from adults such as parents and teachers" (Steinberg, 1990).

The following poem written by an eighth grade student expresses the turmoil that these constant changes typically produce in early adolescents.

> Life gets so confusing
> And hard to figure out
> I'm growing up so fast,
> What's it all about?
> Things are changing quickly,
> Time is flying by.
> I'm becoming a different person,
> Sometimes I wonder why.
> Sometimes it gets real scary
> And I want to run away,
> But I know things will fit
> Together...
> Somehow, sometime, someday.
> (as cited in Wood & Jones, 1997, p.292)

Physical Characteristics

Physically, the middle school students are changing at a rate faster than at any other time of their lives, with the exception of infancy. Different parts of the body grow at different rates, resulting in "the appearance of disproportionate body parts" (Caissy, 1994, p. 18). Uneven bone and muscle growth cause poor coordination and awkwardness. Alternating periods of extreme restlessness and total fatigue are common during this time period.

Development of the reproduction systems, stimulated by increased hormone levels, are accompanied by physical changes in voice, height, facial hair for males, and breast development for females. Hair becomes oily, and the adolescents begin to perspire more heavily, producing body odor. The physical changes occur over a five to six year span. Girls usually begin to undergo puberty 18 to 24 months before boys, beginning at age ten or eleven (Meehan & Astor-Stetson, 1998, pp. 20-21).

Emotional Characteristics

The physical changes that accompany the onset of puberty are a source of both pride and embarrassment for the developing adolescent. At a time when the teens begin to look more like adults, they are typically very unsure about how they feel. Psychological challenges become a way of life for the adolescent as they struggle to incorporate their changing body into their self-image. Concerns about physical appearance frequently become a major preoccupation (Meehan & Astor-Stetson, 1998, pp. 20-21).

According to Bernstein:

> The uncertainty that accompanies puberty's onset explains a lot about the behavior of preadolescents: their intense, quickly shifting moods; their frequent inability to explain why they are feeling down, or their tendency to fix blame on a single aspect of their lives; their zigzagging between impressive displays of a new responsibility. . . and shows of bad judgment and impulsiveness (1998, p.22)

"Frequent changes in mood are often accompanied by giggling, laughter, pouting, or intense anger" (Caissy, 1994, p. 33).

Social Characteristics

The middle school peer group begins to take on a more important point of reference for day-to-day activities. "In middle school, children report more positive perceptions of their relationships with peers and less positive perceptions of their relationships with adults. (Lynch & Cicchetti, 1997, p. 81). They can become preoccupied with social acceptance and developing sexual relationships (Brown, 1990; Pikulski, 1991).

> Cultural and social class differences may be seen in friendship patterns, identity development, social expectations, learning styles and self-esteem. Similarly, gender differences can be identified in health concerns, social networks, sex-role attitudes and relationship between self-image and school achievement. (Manning, 1998, p. 46)

Wood and Jones (1997) suggested that "students' social needs are at a peek between the ages of 11 and 15" (p. 293). This sets up an internal conflict because they have a need for feeling accepted and that they belong to a group at the same time that they have a need to be recognized as an unique individual (George & Lawrence, 1982). This internal conflict is often played out in "rocky" relationships with peers and/or adults. One day they are best friends and the next day they can't stand one another. According to Caissy (1994), "While at times it is intentional, early adolescents usually are so focused on themselves and their needs, they do not realize that they are being rude or that they are hurting other people's feelings" (p. 34).

Cognitive Characteristics

Cognitively, middle school students are moving into the Piagtian developmental period of formal operations. This allows them to become more and more capable of abstract thought. Formal operations thought not only allows the early adolescent to conceptualize his or her own thought, but to conceptualize the thoughts of others as well. As a result, they are constantly playing life before "an imaginary audience" postulating about how others perceive them. From their perspective, "only they can suffer with such agonized intensity or experience such exquisite rapture" (Elkind 1967, p. 1031).

Because adolescents are more abstract, systematic, and logical than younger children they can "appreciate metaphor and sarcasm, easily think about things that do not exist, can test ideas against reality, they can readily conceive of multiple possibilities. Many of these improvements in thinking abilities contribute to conflict with adults as adolescents become much better able to argue a point or take a stand" (Meehan & Astor-Stetson, 1998, p. 44). These students are now able to think through and plan out their argument and anticipate objections others might voice.

Caissy (1994) reported that there appears to be a "slowdown in intellectual growth and mental capacity between ages 12 and 14. This begins somewhat earlier in girls than in boys, and it generally corresponds to children in the seventh and eighth grades" (p. 104). Caissy also reported that the attention span and ability to concentrate of early adolescents "becomes temporarily

shorter than in previous periods" (p. 106). Their learning periods need to be broken into short periods of time and it helps if the students are actively engaged in activities rather than passive observers.

Eccles (as cited in Azar, 1996) summarized her findings of student's transition from the elementary school to middle school as follows: (a) On average, children's grades drop dramatically during the first year of middle school, compared to grades in elementary school. (b) After moving to junior high, children become less interested in school and less self-assured about their abilities. (c) Compared to elementary schools, middle schools are more controlling, less cognitively challenging, and focus more on competition and comparing students' ability. This appears to support the earlier conclusion of Eccles and Midgley (1988) that "the declines in motivation often assumed to be characteristic of the early adolescent period are less a consequence of the students' developmental stage than of the mismatch between the students' needs and the opportunities afforded them in many middle-grades school settings" (p. 538).

Time Allocation

Time. Each day contains but 24 hours. How students use those available hours tends to change over time. As students move from elementary school into early adolescence, there are a multitude of new interests and activities that become available to them. Throughout the elementary years parents and teachers normally specify how students spend much of their time. As the

students enter middle school they are provided with more opportunities to decide how to spend those waking hours. Students devote less of that available time to leisure reading as they progress through the school years (Clary, 1991; Greaney, 1980). When asked why they don't read or read more, reluctant readers' most common response was "no time" (Martin, 1991, p. 50).

Although students at the middle school level may be afforded more freedom in choosing how they spend their time, they and their teachers are still bounded by the concept of time. The National Commission on Time and Learning (1994) stated:

> Learning in [our schools] is a prisoner of time. For the past 150 years . . . [public] schools have held time constant and let learning vary. . . . Our schools and the people involved with them . . . are captives of clock and calendars. The boundaries of student growth are defined by schedules, bells, buses and vacations instead of standards for students and learning. (p. 7)

The impact of time cannot be denied. How middle school students spend their available time, however, has not been recently documented. Fuligni (2000) reported that "few comprehensive studies on adolescents' use of time in the United States exist" (p. 4). Those studies that do exist focus on high school students rather than middle school students. The available data suggested that socializing with friends and working in part-time jobs occupy the largest portions of adolescents' leisure time. High school students reportedly spent 29% of their waking time involved in class work or studying on their own and 40% of their

time in leisure activities such as socializing with friends, playing sports and games, or watching television. Adolescents spent slightly more than half of their leisure time with their peers, 27% of their time alone, and 19% of their time with family members (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984).

In a study reported in the 1981 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) report, almost half of the seventeen year olds named reading as their least favorite leisure time activity. Among the conclusions of the 1981 NAEP report was that students like reading less as they get older. As students progress through our educational system, the amount of time they spend engaged in voluntary reading generally decreases.

Ley et al. (1994) examined the reading attitudes and reading behaviors of 164 middle school students over time. They administered the same test (the Teale and Lewis Reading Attitude Scales, 1981) to the same students in sixth, seventh, and eight grades. The results of their study confirmed that "student's general reading attitudes and the frequency of voluntary reading declined during the three-year period" (p. 11). By the middle school level, a growing number of students who are capable of reading choose not to read.

In 1992, at least 30% of the nation's eighth graders spent more than two hours per day unsupervised each week day (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1992). These students were more likely than their peers to fail at school, to use drugs, or to engage in early sexual relations (Benson, 1996). On the other side of the coin, students who work or engage in extracurricular

activities for twenty hours a week or more are more likely than their peers to suffer academically (Steinberg, Brown, & Dornbush, 1996).

As Readers

By the end of fourth grade, the average reader has achieved basic fluency. They read orally fairly accurately and fluently. They no longer read word by word, but are able to read in thought units. Limitations in word meaning or a lack of background experiences may limit word identification efforts in oral reading. Decoding strategies are generally well developed, as are basic comprehension strategies. "Because of the limited amount of background information acquired up to this time, these readers frequently misinterpret information and miss allusions to ideas." Average readers of this age typically have few study strategies and "don't read much" (Early, 1984).

Gallik (1999), Clary (1991), and Greaney (1980) reported that as students get older they are more likely to become alliterate. Greaney (1980) also found that fifth grade students spent only 5.4 percent of their leisure time engaged in reading, and that 22 percent of them did not read at all. A survey of 723 sixth-grade students concluded that "a substantial number of adolescents do not choose to read either for pleasure or for information (McEady-Gillead, 1989, p. 1). According to Johns (1978), "by ninth grade, 90% of the reading is done by 10 percent of the students" (p. 69).

Reading achievement

Studies with elementary students (Morrow, 1992; Morrow, O'Connor, & Smith, 1990; Anderson et al., 1988; Greaney, 1980) suggested a strong relationship between leisure reading and reading achievement. Voluntary readers demonstrated positive attitudes towards reading, greater skill development, and higher performance in fine motor control, social and emotional maturity, good work habits, and general excellence in school achievement. These studies do not however, answer the question of whether these positive effects are a result of voluntary reading or whether students with these characteristics are more likely to read voluntarily. This is a correlational relationship, not a cause-effect relationship. They also do not answer the question of whether this relationship between amount of voluntary reading and improved school achievement carry over into the middle school years.

A 1988 study found that fifth grade students who voluntarily read outside of school made better gains in reading achievement (from second grade to fifth grade) than did their non-reading peers. Reading as little as ten minutes per day was highly correlated to increased reading proficiency. Most children, however, did little or no reading of books outside of class (Anderson et al., 1988, p. 297).

Morrow (1986) stated, "youngsters who demonstrate voluntary interest in books are rated significantly higher by teachers on school performance than are children with low interest in books. They also score significantly higher on

standardized tests and in work habits, social and emotional maturity, and language arts skills" (p. 161). In a study of 5th and 6th grade students of average and above average reading ability, Taylor, Frye, and Maruyama (1990) found that "the minutes of reading per day during reading class variable contributed significantly to students' reading achievement as measured by their standardized reading comprehension scores on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test" (p. 357).

Anderson et al. (1988) studied 155 fifth-grade students. The students recorded their out-of-school daily activities. "Among all the ways children spent their time, reading books was the best predictor of . . . reading achievement. . . . However, on most days most children did little or no book reading" (p. 285). Greaney (1980) asked 920 fifth grade students in 31 schools to complete a diary of how they spent their leisure time on three days in a one week period. He concluded that "those who obtain low scores on reading attainment tend to devote relatively little time to book reading or comic reading" (p. 354).

Reading attitudes

The literature on middle school students suggests that they have negative attitudes toward reading. During the middle school years, students' attitudes toward reading and their frequency of reading both decline (McKenna et al., 1995; Ley et al., 1994; Shapiro & White, 1991; Anderson, Tollefson, & Gilbert, 1985).

Looking at gifted students (grades 1-12), Anderson et al. (1985) concluded that students' perceptions of reading change as they mature. In this study, older students were less interested in reading as a leisure time activity than were younger students. These attitudes were often interpreted as being a lack of student motivation.

Reading habits

Mellon (1990) surveyed 700 rural North Carolina students in grades seven through twelve. Results of this survey indicated that: (a) Most students liked to read when they were not forced to read and when they did not have to make reports on what they read. (b) The overwhelming majority of teens chose leisure reading materials by the recommendations of friends. (c) Teens read books and periodicals available in their homes. (d) Magazines and newspapers were the all-time favorite reading material of teens. (e) According to the students, reading books, was *reading*; reading magazines and newspapers was "not really reading" (p. 224). (f) Teens read magazines for the same reasons they read books: for pleasure, for information, and for escape (p. 224).

Bintz (1993), who served as part of a research team studying students in grades six through eleven, found that students who perceived themselves as good readers but who were perceived by teachers as being passive or reluctant readers expected assigned reading to be boring. They developed complex strategies for avoiding reading assigned material (e.g., reading only the headings in a text; skimming; predicting sections the teacher would consider

important and then reading only those parts; reading only the first sentence of each paragraph). Some of those same students read, (a) books of their own choice, (b) extensively during their free time, and (c) especially during the summer (p. 611).

Goodlad (1984) reported that students spend very little time in schools actually engaged in reading. Excluding round robin reading in classrooms, junior high aged students spent only three per cent of their school time reading. Greaney (1980) found that fifth grade students spent a mean of sixty minutes or about 5.4 % of their leisure time over a three day period involved in leisure reading (p. 353). Greaney also (1980) reported that "girls read more books than boys although boys read more non-fiction material than girls" (p. 340).

Shapiro and Whitney (1997) found similar results in their study of the reading habits of fourth and fifth grade students. Students spent approximately twenty minutes per day engaged in leisure reading during the reporting period (pp. 350-1). Other leisure time activities included (in descending frequency) "watching TV, play with friends (e.g., "me and my friends hung out"), sports (organized and unorganized), board games, and video games" (p. 359). Contrary to popular belief and the researchers' expectations, "television viewing and the reading habit do not correlate highly either negatively or positively" (Morrow, 1986; Moldenhauer & Miller, 1980).

In a study of college freshman enrolled in a developmental reading course, Duchein and Mealey (1993) found the following themes through an

analysis of these students' journal writings: (a) More than two-thirds of the participants had parents or significant others who read to them prior to their entering school. (b) More than half of the participants had positive memories of being read to by teachers in the primary grades. (c) Those teachers who did read aloud during later grades made significant, positive, and long-lasting impressions upon their students. (e) Students who had regular in-class time set aside for reading found this practice to be important and valued. (f) Two-thirds of the participants expressed considerable difficulty in sustaining an interest in reading due to the social, physical, and academic demands of late childhood and adolescence (p. 17).

Rinehart, Gerlach, and Wisell (1998) concluded that eighth grade students rely mostly on the back of the book summary to select books. They reported that both boys and girls like thriller, sports, humor, and action books. The students said they read books that friends recommended and often recommended books to others. These recommendations took place within the school setting, but not as part of a class (pp. 275-276). In a related study, Johnson-Kuby and Katz (1996) surveyed 365 sixth through eighth grade students, and found that students rely mostly on suggestions from friends (24%) when selecting a book to read. This was followed in frequency by how the book looked or its location on the shelf (16%) and parental influences (12%) (pp. 146-147).

Traw (1993) found that eighth grade students' recreational reading took place within the following genre (in descending frequency): teen issues, romance, mystery/suspense, supernatural/horror, fantasy, and science fiction. Girls read twice as many books, on average, as boys and were more likely to read romance novels or teen issue books. Only one girl read a fantasy or science fiction book. Many of the books that the students read were what Traw referred to as "subliterature" or books of low literary quality. The majority of the students who read subliterature were also the most prolific readers. He concluded that "subliterature has the potential to act as a bridge to higher quality reading" (p. 13). In a study of sixth grade students' reading preferences and their access to reading materials, Worthy, Moorman, and Turner (1999) found that these students' most preferred materials were scary books and stories, comics and cartoons, magazines about popular culture, and books and magazines about sports.

Motivation

For the purposes of this study, motivation is defined as the concept that explains why people do the things they do. Motivation is an incentive, an inducement, a motive. It is what makes an individual act or do the things he/she does (Owens, 1995; Wlodkowski, 1977). There is no one motivation that is effective with all people. Rather, there are as many factors affecting motivation as there are human beings.

What motivates someone today may not be motivating to that same person tomorrow. Motivational factors are relatively temporary and reversible states that tend to energize or activate the behavior of organisms (Logan & Gordon, 1981). In different circumstances, people are motivated by different things. As situations change, so does a person's motivation. What motivates a six year old will probably not be motivating to that same individual ten years later as a sixteen year old. A behavior contract that appears to be effective today may not be effective in six weeks. As people grow and mature, what they find motivating changes. Students are not simply motivated or unmotivated. They may be motivated for one literacy activity and unmotivated to engage in another activity (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997).

Types of Motivation

The two most commonly identified divisions of motivation are intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Other factors impacting motivation can be classified as being either intrinsic or extrinsic. Therefore, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are umbrella, or overarching, terms in this study.

Intrinsic motivation

Intrinsic motivation comes from within a person. The cognitive and humanistic movements support the concept of intrinsic motivation. "The internal capacities of individuals, primarily emotional and cognitive, give rise to feelings, aspirations, perceptions, attitudes, and thoughts, and it is these that can be motivating or demotivating" (Owens, 1995, p. 27). People are motivated by the

creation of growth-enhancing environments that allow people the opportunities to grow and mature both intellectually and emotionally.

Human beings have a natural desire for cognitive equilibrium. In other words, they want to make sense of their world. The central thrust of Piaget's work is that children are always engaged in the process of making sense of things. They have an intrinsic need to make sense of their world. "Like detectives they investigate, reason, question, fantasize, and experiment in an attempt to understand what people do and how things work" (Cowan, 1978, p. 11).

When cognitive dissonance (information that doesn't make sense to the individual) is introduced, there is a natural desire to *make sense* of the new information. The individual is motivated to seek out new information or make connections with existing information that will allow him/her to regain a comfortable cognitive balance. The individual works to make the newly introduced information fit into his/her existing cognitive patterns or formulate new pathways that accommodate all known information.

The natural outcome of intrinsic motivation is engagement (Wigfield, 1997). Engagement during reading means sustained personal commitment to creating understanding while one reads (Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991). When people are intrinsically motivated by an activity, they become engaged in the activity. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) referred to this engagement as *flow*. Flow is "the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems

to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it" (p. 4).

Intrinsic motivation is a less invasive process than extrinsic motivation. However, it also can be a slower process. It takes time to mature intellectually and emotionally. But, intrinsic motivation normally obtains longer lasting results than does extrinsic motivation. People are less likely to part with results they have a vested interest in than those resulting from an external stimulus. This suggests that there are times and situations in which intrinsic motivation is called for and times where extrinsic motivation is necessary. There still may be other times in which a combination of both forms of motivation best serves the needs of those involved.

Extrinsic motivation

Extrinsic motivation is something done outside of an individual. It involves identifying what a person wants and giving it to them. The person is motivated to attain the reward or avoid punishment and therefore performs the deed(s) necessary for attainment. This is the behavioristic explanation of motivation, sometimes referred to as a carrot and stick metaphor. Extrinsic motivation theory is based heavily on Skinner's (1987) stimulus-response work.

Some forms of learning respond best to extrinsic motivation. Memorizing lists of isolated information bits is an example. The items in these lists do not depend on a specific physical context. The information is not connected. It must be rehearsed to be memorized. Caine and Caine (1994) suggested that

"memorization can be likened to storage. There usually is no provision made for a fundamental shift or development of higher order thinking inside the learner" (p. 137). Memorizing a list of facts is an exercise in storing information for later retrieval. Use of extrinsic motivation is therefore an effective methodology for encouraging students to memorize a list of facts.

The positive side to extrinsic motivation is that it works. As Sergiovanni (1992) said, "What gets rewarded gets done" (p. 25). If you can identify what a person wants, you can manipulate the situation to get what you want in the process. But this is a double-edged sword. Because extrinsic motivation works, it makes individuals vulnerable to coercion. Adults who use external motivation can skillfully coerce children, and even other adults, on a regular basis (Spielberger, 1972).

The other major criticism of extrinsic motivation is that some researchers (Kohn, 1995; Caine & Caine, 1994; Spielberger, 1972) believe external coercion kills intrinsic motivation. Spielberger (1972) reported that "human subjects. . . become much more attentive to reinforcement by others through rewards and punishment. In effect, they prefer external forms of motivation and lose sight of intrinsic motivation" (p. 76).

Kohn (1995) suggested that providing rewards is a death sentence to instrinsic motivation. The more complex the activity, the more it is hurt by extrinsic reward. Children are naturally willing to complete meaningful activities. If we reward those efforts with extrinsic rewards, the children learn to expect

reinforcement for every effort. Eventually, they deduce that they have earned the right to be rewarded for each effort. They no longer display their natural curiosity or intrinsic motivation. Caine and Caine (1994) asserted that "a system of rewards and punishments can be selectively demotivating in the long term, particularly where others have control over the system. It reduces the desire as well as the capacity of learners to engage in original thought" (p. 77).

Summary

A review of the literature indicated that reading is one component of the language arts. Elements of the reading process include decoding, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency. How to best teach these elements has been debated throughout the years. Today's best pedagogy practices suggest the need for a balanced curriculum that provides students with a variety of strategies to use as warrented by different circumstances.

The middle school philosophy focuses on addressing the unique academic and emotional needs of each student. It recognizes, and even celebrates the differences among students. Educators implementing the middle school philosophy recognize the unique characteristics of the preadolescent. They realize that these students are in the midst of the most physical, emotional, social, and cognitive changes they will ever face with the exception of infancy. As a result, these students are unsure about how they feel about themselves or others. They are susceptible to frequent mood swings. They want to be unique individuals, but they also want to be accepted by and feel apart of the group.

They can now conceptualize thoughts of others and are better able to argue a point. This often results in conflict with peers or adults. Although all students pass through these changes, they do not progress through them at the same rate. A school environment based upon the middle school philosophy is designed to meet the broad range of changing individual needs.

As students enter this time of rapid change, they tend to read less (in and out of school) than they did in elementary school. There is a direct relationship between the amount of time a student spends engaged in reading and their level of reading achievement. The attitudes of preadolescents about reading tend to become less positive as they progress through school. When students do select a book to read, most of them do so based upon the information on the back cover of the book. Why some students are more motivated to read than others appears to change over time and to be situation specific.

Chapter 3

METHOD

Heathington and Alexander (1984) documented that "students who are capable of reading but choose not to read exist" (p.488). I focused on why, from the perspective of the students themselves, this may be true. "Research focused on discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied offers the greatest promise of making significant contributions to the knowledge base and practice of education" (Merriam, 1988, p.3).

Qualitative research is now recognized as an acceptable and often the preferred methodology for tapping the knowledge base of human subjects. According to Kvale (1996):

> There is a move away from obtaining knowledge primarily through external observation and experimental manipulation of human subjects, toward an understanding by means of conversations with the human beings to be understood. The subjects not only answer questions prepared by an expert, but themselves formulate in a dialogue their own conceptions of their lived world. The sensitivity of the interview and its closeness to the subjects' lived world can lead to knowledge that can be used to enhance the human condition. (p. 11)

This qualitative process can help enhance the human condition through the identification of classroom practices that effectively promote reading behaviors among middle school students. Qualitative research methodology is a "particularly suitable methodology for dealing with critical problems of practice and extending the knowledge base of various aspects of education . . . to

improve practice" (Merriam, 1988, p. xiii). This research offers an opportunity for "insight, discovery, and interpretation . . . a holistic description and explanation" (Merriam, 1988, p.10).

Creswell (1998) described qualitative research as "an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting" (p. 15). This method enabled the students themselves to discuss why they choose not to read.

Subjects and Selection Procedures

Seventh and eighth grade students who are capable of reading but choose not to read were selected as subjects of this study. Middle schools and junior high schools include a variety of grade levels ranging from fifth through ninth grades. Seventh and eighth grades are consistently included in the middle school or junior high designation (Pikulski, 1991, p. 303).

The Anywhere Middle School houses seventh and eighth grade students. The subjects of this study are seventh and eighth grade students attending school in Anywhere, Iowa. Anywhere is a rural community with a population of 6000 and is the county seat. The school district also includes students from several nearby smaller communities. There are approximately 300 students, primarily Caucasian, at the two (seventh and eighth) grade levels.

The *Motivation to Read Profile - Reading Scale* (MRP) by Gambrell et al. (1996) was used to identify students who are able to read, but choose not to read (Appendix A). The MRP was administered to all seventh and eighth grade students in the district who were enrolled in general education language arts classes during the fall of 1998. I read the MRP scale to students to remove any handicapping effects of reading deficiencies. This also helped assure consistency of administration procedures.

Half of the items in this survey evaluated the students' perception of their ability to read. The second half of the items identified those students who choose not to read. Additional items (Appendix B) were added to the MRP survey to establish demographic information about the population being studied. This information was used within the district. I used the curriculum director's and language arts teachers' ideas when designing these items.

A total of 23 students were selected as final subjects for this study. The subjects identified were all students at Anywhere Middle School and were enrolled in general education language arts classes. Each of the 23 subjects earned an ability score of at least 26 and an attitude score of less than 20 on the MRP survey.

All subjects were Caucasian and four were new to the Anywhere school system. Seven of the 23 subjects received free or reduced school lunches. (According to the curriculum director, others may qualify for free or reduced lunches, but did not apply for the benefit.) Five subjects were in seventh grade

and eighteen were in eighth grade. Sixteen subjects were male and seven were female. In the seventh grade class, two subjects were female and three were male. In the eighth grade class, five subjects were female and thirteen were male.

Survey Results

The distribution of ability scores produced a bell shaped curve with scores ranging from 18 to 40. Likewise, the distribution of attitude scores produced a bell shaped curve, but this time with scores ranging from 10 to 40. Based on the distribution of scores,19 students met the criteria of an attitude score of less than 19 and an ability score of 26 or above.

Teacher verification

The list of19 students was submitted to the language arts teachers for verification. The teachers reviewed the list and indicated any students that surprised them. The teachers used standardized test scores, alternative assessments, observation, and/or any other data they deemed appropriate to help them make informed judgments concerning which students were capable of reading, but chose not to read. This step was necessary because the MRP is a self-reporting format. "Self-reports can be used effectively to measure student perceptions of motivation and cognitive engagement (Ames & Archer, 1988; Meece, Blumenfeld, & Hoyle, 1988; Weinstein, Marshall, Sharp, & Bolkin, 1987), but the results need to be replicated with other measures" (Pintrich & De Groot,

1990, p. 38). The teachers' ratings of students served as a replication of the MRP results.

The seventh grade teacher reported that one of the subjects identified by the MRP was a resource student integrated into the language arts classroom whom the teacher felt did not meet the criteria of being a capable reader. Therefore this student was not included in the study.

Informed consent forms (Appendix C) were distributed to the parents of the remaining eighteen students. Fifteen of these students (four girls and eleven boys, four seventh graders, eleven eighth graders) returned signed permission slips and therefore became subjects of this study.

An additional eight students (three girls and five boys, one seventh grader and seven eighth graders) were added to increase the pool of subjects. These students had received the next lowest attitude scores (earning scores of less than 20). The language arts teachers again compared this list with their lists and agreed with the selections. Permission slips were then distributed to these students, and all eight returned signed permission slips.

Protection of Subject's Rights

Prior to the collection of any data, a proposal was submitted to both the Anywhere Community School District and Drake University Human Subjects Review Committees outlining the purposes and procedures of the study. A consent form (see Appendix C) was also signed by both the student and a parent prior to collection of any individual data. The proposal addressed ethical

safeguards, subject risk, informed consent, right to withdraw, and debriefing procedures (Borg & Gall, 1989, p.99). Approval was received from the Anywhere Human Subjects Review Committee on October 22, 1998, and from the Drake University Committee on November 3, 1998 (Appendix C).

Data Sources

Data sources for this study included initial interviews, open-ended questionnaires, follow-up interviews, reading logs, and field notes. Multiple sources were kept because in triangulation, multiple sources of information corroborate developing themes (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1988; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Borg and Gall (1989) stated, "Triangulation can also be achieved by collecting essentially the same data from different samples, at different times, and in different places. In this sense, triangulation is simply a form of replication that contributes greatly to our confidence in the research findings" (p. 393).

Initial and Follow-up Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted during the 1998 fall semester and again during the 1999 spring semester. The semi-structured interview utilizes a combination of standardized questions and open-ended questions, as well as providing the opportunity for unstructured sharing by the interviewee. Merriam (1988) summarizes the approach as follows,

> In most studies the researcher can combine all three types of interviewing so that some standardized information is obtained, some of the same open-ended questions are asked of all participants, and some time is spent in an unstructured mode so that

> fresh insights and new information can emerge. (p. 74)

"It [a semi-structured interview format] allows us to share the world of others to find out what is going on, why people do what they do, and how they understand their worlds" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 5).

I used a modified version (Appendix E) of the *Motivation to Read Profile* (Appendix D), or MRP, as the interview protocol in this study. I modified the original profile to reflect issues identified by district administrators and staff as possible factors influencing students' choices about reading. Gambrell et al. (1996) granted permission to make modifications to their instrument. "Teachers are also encouraged to extend, modify, and adapt the 14 questions outlined in the Conversational Interview" (p. 529).

I used the profile as a guide, but did not follow the guide verbatim. Subjects were encouraged to speak freely about their feelings and experiences with reading. I used the questions from the profile to initiate the conversation and to probe for further information when subjects ceased talking. This provided (a) needed flexibility to gather information on some standardized topics, (b) flow of open-ended reflections, and (c) the free flow of fresh insights and understandings. Not all subjects were asked the exact same questions in the same order. The wording of questions varied slightly and the order of questions was determined by the flow of the conversation.

According to Rubin and Rubin (1995), in a semi-structured interview format, "the interviewer introduces the topic, then guides the discussion by asking specific questions" (p. 5). "Researchers listen to each answer and determine the next question based on what was said" (p. 7). "Asking everyone the same questions makes little sense in qualitative interviewing where the goal is to find out what happened and why, in rich and individualistic terms" (p.11).

The interviews were necessary because the self-reporting survey format used by Gambrell et al. (1996) allows researchers to gather an abundance of information in a short time period, but it does not access the depth of rich information that individual interviews provide. The interview format allowed me to probe for further details and clarify questions as they arose. Rubin and Rubin (1995) contended that qualitative interviews "are a tool of research, an intentional way of learning about people's feelings, thoughts, and experiences. . . . Understanding is achieved by encouraging people to describe their worlds in their own terms" (p. 2).

For the initial interviews, two students were interviewed during their language arts class time, while 21 were interviewed during a study hall time. Each interview took approximately 15 to 20 minutes. All interviews were conducted during a two week time period in the fall of 1998. The interviews were tape recorded, transcribed verbatim by a secretary, double checked for accuracy by me, and xeroxed on the student's assigned color of paper.

During the 1999 spring semester, follow-up interviews were conducted, because as I analyzed the first set of interview data it was clear that thicker, richer data and further clarifying of information were needed. This presented the opportunity to probe for additional information, provide students the opportunity to express additional ideas or correct misconceptions, and examine the consistency of students' responses over time.

"The trust and interest needed for an in-depth interview grow as part of an ongoing relationship. . . . The strongest relationships evolve when interviewer and interviewee talk face-to-face over several separate encounters" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p.143). This was the fourth time during the 1998-1999 school year that the students had met face-to-face with me. Follow-up interviews were conducted with the 22 subjects who were still enrolled in Anywhere Middle School in May of 1999. These interviews were also semi-structured, taped recorded, and transcribed verbatim by a secretary, checked for accuracy by me, and xeroxed on each student's assigned color of paper.

Open-ended Questionnaires

Themes and tentative hypotheses began to emerge from the analysis of the initial interviews. To test these predictions further, additional information was collected through an open-ended questionnaire. Merriam (1988) suggested:

> Data collection and analysis is a *simultaneous* activity in qualitative research. Analysis begins with the first interview, the first observation, the first document

> read. Emerging insights, hunches, and tentative hypotheses direct the next phase of data collection, which in turn leads to refinement or reformulation of one's questions, and so on. It is an interactive process. (p. 119)

Questionnaires were administered and collected between the initial and follow-up interviews. I read the questions orally to the students and they responded by writing their answers. This questionnaire (Appendix F) took approximately ten minutes for each student to complete.

One subject from the original group (Avery) was being home schooled when I returned to complete the questionnaire and the follow-up interviews. Because his educational experiences were now so different from those of the other students, I decided not to include his questionnaire and follow-up interview data. Because he was a student at Anywhere Middle School at the time of the first interview, I did include that particular data in this study.

The questionnaires provided the opportunity to corroborate initial interview and survey data. Merriam reported that "documents of all types can help the researcher uncover meaning, develop understanding, and discover insights relevant to the research problem" (p. 118). Information from the answers to the questionnaires was used to formulate questions for the follow-up interviews.

Reading Logs

Lincoln and Guba (1985) reported that there are many reasons to use written records. Written records include "any written or recorded statement

prepared by or for an individual or organization for the purpose of *attesting to an event* or *providing an accounting"* (p. 277). These are valuable sources of information because: (a) "they are almost always available on a low-cost or free basis, (b) they are a stable source of information (they don't change over time), and (c) they are a *rich* source of information, contextually relevant and grounded in the contexts they represent" (pp. 276-277).

Each student kept a reading log in which they recorded their feelings about reading. The seventh graders were already keeping reading logs as a regular part of their classroom assignments. Each day the seventh graders wrote to their teacher questions, comments, or feelings they had about the book they were currently reading. At least once a week, she wrote comments back to them. She asked them to think about a topic in a new way, suggested other resources, asked for clarification about something they had written, agreed with points they had made in a journal entry, or offered encouragement. The reading logs of the five seventh grade students were included as data in this study.

The eighth grade students were not keeping reading logs during the time of this study. The language arts teacher asked her students to complete a reading log as an additional assignment. Four of the eleven eighth grade students returned their completed logs.

Field Notes

Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended keeping a "reflexive journal" (p. 327). This journal recorded my thoughts, reflections, speculations, and anything

germane to the study (i.e. logistics and methodology). Therefore, field notes became an additional data source. After each interview, personal reflections of the student's demeanor, body language, and willingness to respond were recorded. Conditions at the school and anything else that might affect the data being collected were noted. As much as possible, everything that was going on at the time of the interview or that might have any bearing on what transpired during the interview was captured in field notes.

Data Analysis

Before I could begin the data analysis I attempted to bracket (meaning to set aside) any preconceived theories and experiences brought to the study. Bracketing is intended to clear the mind of any pre-existing ideas so that understanding is through the voices of the subjects. Bracketing is a strategy used to bypass the negative effects of researcher bias.

Original copies of each transcribed interview, survey and questionnaire protocol, student reading log, and my field notes were filed in a notebook. This maintained the data in their entirety for future reference.

The data analysis process identified by Rubin and Rubin (1995) was followed. As the first step, the data were read and reread in their entirety to gain an overall picture of the content. Second, concepts, themes, and ideas were marked each time they occurred within the data. Each time a new concept, theme, or idea was identified, data were then reread from the beginning. Each example of the newly identified concept, theme, or idea was marked. The color

coded data were separated so that there was one concept, theme, or idea on each slip of paper. (Occasionally a duplicate copy of a statement needed to be made as more than one concept, theme, or idea was contained in one statement. When this happened the duplicate copy was so marked.) Creswell refers to this step as "horizonalization" (1998, p. 147). Creswell also suggested that each statement has "equal worth" at this point in the analysis process.

Like concepts, themes, or ideas were grouped by category. "Categories are derived by constantly comparing one incident or unit of information with another" (Merriam, 1988, p. 142). Merriam (1988) referred to this process as constant comparative methodology (p. 347). Lincoln and Guba (1985) commented that "clearly the method of constant comparison provides an excellent fit with . . . continuous and simultaneous collection *and* processing of data" (p. 335). Some categories were explicitly stated by the subjects. Some categories were developed by combining information from several subjects. "By combining information from different interviews, the researcher creates descriptive themes that no individual interviewee mentioned " (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 235).

A file folder was established for each category as it emerged. Moustakas (1994) referred to these as "clusters of meanings". Examples of categories included: talks to friends about books; suggestions for teachers; importance of reading; memories of learning to read. This process is referred to as open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) or domain analysis (Spradley, 1979).

I further refined the coding process by rereading all the student excerpts. Subcategories or coding units within the overall category helped to explain or develop the emerging theme. The coding units were marked (underlined) and labeled (using colored post-it notes). I used the coding units to identify various components of the emerging overall theme. "Coding units can be themes, concepts, ideas . . . names, major projects, dates, steps of a process, or just about anything that you think might be useful in tying things together" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 241).

The goal of this activity was to develop an overall theory that provided explanation to why middle school students who are capable of reading choose not to read. Strauss and Corbin (1990) referred to this as developing a theory, or "a plausible relationship among concepts and sets of concepts" (p. 56). This process was repeated for each category folder. This sequence is recognized as appropriate qualitative research procedure (Creswell, 1998; Kvale, 1996; Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Merriam, 1988; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Themes or patterns between the various folders or across categories were identified. To assist in this process I summarized the data in a computer data base (Corel Paradox 8) which allowed me to easily move the data around by categories so I could look at the same data in a variety of ways. According to Rubin and Rubin (1995), "Once you find the individual concepts and themes, you have to put them together to build an integrated explanation" (p. 251).

The spiral data analysis process described by Creswell (1998) visually represents the data analysis process. This process is not linear. Rather, "to analyze qualitative data, the researcher engages in the process of moving in analytic circles" (p. 142). This approach involves organizing the data in a variety of ways, reading and rereading the data, analyzing the data first one way and then another way. After analyzing the data in several ways, I decided that more information was needed and that the information already collected would be stronger if it was verified through triangulation, "a form of replication" (Borg & Gall, 1989, p.393). That is how I determined the need to administer the open-ended questionnaires. The information gathered through the questionnaires guided the formation of the questions used in the follow-up interviews.

Reporting

A copy of the final report will be presented to the Anywhere Community School District. A date will be set for Anywhere personnel (administrators, teachers, students) involved in the study to ask questions and/or clarify points made in the report. All data (MRP responses, teachers' rating data, my field notes, interview tapes, and student logs) will be destroyed within two years after the completion of the study to insure confidentiality of the subjects.

Trustworthiness

Any methodology consists of strengths and limitations. The strength of the case study research design is that it "offers a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in

understanding the phenomenon. Anchored in real-life situations, the case study results in a rich and holistic account of a phenomenon" (Merriam, 1988, p. 32).

Trustworthiness addresses the questions of "truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290). Truth value is the extent to which the reader is convinced that the results of the study represent the "truth" about the subjects of the study under the described conditions. Applicability refers to the extent to which the findings of the study are applicable to other subjects. Consistency refers to the likelihood that the results of the study could be replicated, given the same set of circumstances. Neutrality is determined by the extent to which the study remains free of researcher bias. Once these conditions of trustworthiness have been established, the reader has the information needed to determine whether or not they can draw generalizations from the study.

According to Cronbach (1975), "when we give proper weight to local conditions, any generalization is a working hypothesis, not a conclusion" (pp. 124-125). Lincoln and Guba (1985) explained "there are always factors that are unique to the locale or series of events that make it useless to try to generalize therefrom. . . . Constant flux militates against conclusions that are always and forever true, they can only be said to be true under such and such conditions and circumstances" (p. 123-124). Each researcher has the responsibility to "provide sufficient information about the context in which an inquiry is carried out so that anyone else interested in transferability has a base of information

appropriate to the judgment" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 124). I followed the rules of trustworthiness by supplying "a rich, thick description" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 125) that provides other readers with the basis to make their own judgements about the transferability of the conclusions.

Researcher Bias

The sensitivity and integrity of the investigator can be either a positive or a negative influence within a study. "The researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis" (Merriam, 1985, p. 34). The researcher can intentionally or unintentionally influence any part of the study. "At all levels of the system what people *think* they're doing, what they *say* they are doing, what they *appear* to others to be doing, and what in fact they *are* doing, may be sources of considerable discrepancy" (MacDonald & Walker, 1977, p. 186).

All researchers enter a research project with their own set of personal opinions concerning the topic. Qualitative methodology requires that the researcher "sets aside all prejudgments, *bracketing* his or her experiences (a return to 'natural science') and relying on intuition, imagination, and universal structures to obtain a picture of the experience" (Creswell, 1998, p. 52).

Self-reporting Instruments

The survey and interviews are both self-reporting instruments. Self-reporting instruments are susceptible to response effects and threats to external validity. Personal interviews allow the researcher to follow-up leads, probe for additional data, and clarify answers. They therefore provide a richer, more

complete picture of the situation. However, the flexibility and adaptability of the interview format also allow greater subjectivity and possible bias to influence data. It is possible that the interviewer or respondent might intentionally or unintentionally bias responses. The relationship between the two partners in the interview may positively or negatively effect the responses provided.

Interviews are also more susceptible to response effects, "the difference between the answer given by the respondent and the true answer" (Borg & Gall, 1989, p. 448), than are other data collection methods. However, in a review of the research on the issues of accuracy and bias in self-evaluation, Assor and Connell (1992) concluded that "self-reported appraisals of competence and efficacy are in fact valid measures of performance affecting self-appraisals in the academic domain" (p.26). The nature of the information being sought and the safety measures built into the design (i.e., triangulation) justify the selection of the procedures outlined.

Chapter 4

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Chapter 4 is a summary of the research findings from this study. I begin by providing background information about the school and the students who participated in the study. I describe the 23 students selected to be subjects in this study. I describe the subjects as a group, pointing out their likenesses and differences. The subjects all are referred to by fictitious names to protect their true identities. A profile of each individual is also embedded within the story of the group as a whole.

In analyzing the data, I identified five themes that emerged from the subjects' stories about why they chose not to read. Those themes were: (a) freedom to select, (b) time allocation, (c) peer relationships, (d) reading attitudes, and (e) reading habits. In Chapter Four I explore these themes more fully. The themes are discussed in their order of frequency. Themes most frequently mentioned by the subjects during their interviews are discussed before themes less frequently mentioned.

Background Information

Because most of you have not had the opportunity to visit Anywhere Middle School, I begin Chapter4 by providing a written snapshot of the school environment of the students who served as subjects in this study.

The first time I entered the Middle School in Anywhere, Iowa, I was struck by the sense of order in the building and the open spaces. "This is definitely a

tightly run ship," I thought to myself. Meeting the principal, Mr. Leader in his crisp, long sleeved, white shirt only reinforced that feeling of order. Computer made signs reminding students of an upcoming math test and the materials needed to take that exam were posted at every turn throughout the hallway. Each classroom door was closed until the bell rang, when teachers promptly entered the hallways while students passed. The entry way was spacious compared to most schools, allowing ample room for the more than 250 students to squeeze their way through. The three hallways formed a "U." In the center of the "U" was a courtyard, complete with trees, grass, flowers in season, and benches.

Students entered the building through assigned doors that led them into the hallway containing their locker. There was a seventh grade hallway and an eighth grade hallway. The two halls were connected by a third hall which included music rooms, an art room, the gymnasium, and a cafeteria, which also served as a study hall. Students were expected to study during study hall. Most students had one study hall per day in a teacher's classroom where there was a small class size and the teacher was aware of at least some of the student's assignments. I later learned that there were a series of bells that allowed seventh graders to pass while eighth graders were still in class. Then eighth graders passed after the seventh graders were already in their new class.

Besides the normal range of special education classes, there also was an at-risk program to assist students in need of a little extra tutorial and/or

organizational help with school work. Guidance counselors served as mentors for the students and followed a student throughout their middle school career. A Student Assistance Team (SAT, composed of teachers, the principal, guidance counselors, and Area Education Agency staff members) met weekly to discuss academic and/or behavioral concerns of students. Once a student was brought before the team, that student was periodically reassessed to assure continuing progress toward the best possible academic resolution of the problem.

Patty, the secretary, warmly greeted me while efficiently answering the seemingly endless phone calls, dispensing medications, and running off papers for teachers, and monitoring the comings and goings of a busy office. She calmly took each new challenge in stride and managed to keep a sense of humor about the unexpected crises that inevitably arise in the office of a Middle School housing more than 250 students. She called each student, teacher, most visitors, and even me by name.

The school sat atop a very gradual hill in the midst of a residential area. It was surrounded by an open yard, on approximately a one block area. The building was all on one level and had windows along one side of each classroom. The classrooms and hallways had tile floors which resulted in a seemingly hollow echo as you walked the hallways between classes. Approximately one fourth of the hallway walls were covered with student work, computer generated banners, informational or decorative posters.

Composite Subject Profile

The following profile was created by listing the responses most commonly provided by the subject group when they took the survey. No one student fits this profile exactly. The profile reflects a compilation of all answers provided by the subjects of this study as they completed the survey. The typical student in this study was an eighth grade boy with at least average reading abilities, who doesn't very often read a book.

"Reluctant Reader Randy" thinks that reading is not fun at all. He never tells friends about good books he has read. He feels people who read a lot are not very interesting or that they may even be boring. He thinks libraries are a boring place to spend time. He knows reading is important, but thinks it is a boring way to spend time. When he grows up, he says he will spend very little or no time reading. He is unhappy when someone gives him a book for a present.

Students

The subjects, at the time of this study, comprised one tenth of the student body at the Middle School in Anywhere, Iowa. A total of 237 students completed the *Motivation to Read Profile* (MRP). Twenty-three students scored themselves high in reading ability, but low in attitude towards reading on the MRP. These 23 students were selected to be subjects in this study.

Eighteen of the 23 subjects were eighth graders. Sixteen of the subjects were males, and seven were female; all students in the study were Caucasian.

Demographic information was not available for the four students (Carl, Emily, Laura, and Oliver) who were new to the district the year the study was completed. Six students (Avery, Carl, Forrest, Gwen, James, and Ned) received free or reduced lunches, thirteen did not. Eight of the subjects were living in a single parent home. Ten subjects lived with two parents, both of whom had the same last name as the child.

Early childhood reading experiences

The majority of the students were read to when they were little. Only Ken, Theresa, and Victor did not remember anyone reading to them. Dr. Seuss books were popular reading material. Many had a favorite book that was read to them over and over. Most remembered being read to at bed time. Mom was most frequently the reader. Gwen and Henry were the only two who did not mention Mom as a reader. Additional readers included Dad, siblings, and grandparents.

Almost half of the students remembered at least part of one nursery rhyme. Those remembering at least one nursery rhyme included Emily, Gwen, Henry, James, Ken, Penny, Robert, Susan, Theresa, Eugene, and Wilma.

School experiences

Two thirds of the students (16 of the 23 subjects) in this study remembered learning to read. Six (Ben, Ian, James, Laura, Susan, and Eugene) mentioned parents helping them learn to read, and five (Ben, Gwen, Ian, Oliver, and Victor) mentioned teachers helping them. Ben remembered his teacher providing direct phonics instruction. He also credits his parents with helping him

learn to read "because my mom and dad read to me, too." Nineteen subjects reported that they were read to when they were younger. Ken, Theresa, Victor, and Wilma did not remember anyone reading to them when they were small. Twelve students said learning to read was remembered as a pleasant experience.

The number of absences the 19 students, for whom the demographic information was available during the 1997-98 school year, had ranged from zero to 22. The mean number of absences for 1997-98 was 4.84 days and the median number of absences was 2.5 days. Quentin and Susan had perfect attendance during the 1997-98 school year. Wilma missed 22 days, and Gwen missed 13.5 days. All fifteen of the eighth graders for whom information was available participated in at least one activity, (i.e., sports, music) during the 1997-98 school year. The number of activities ranged from one to six, with three being the median number of activities.

None of the subjects had been retained during their school career. Only one student (Avery) failed a class during the previous school year. None of the 19 students for which the information was available had a discipline referral in 1997. The 16 eighth graders in this study who were in the district the previous school year had Grade Point Averages (GPA) ranging from 2.214 (Avery) to 3.813 (Forrest). The median GPA was 3.2165.

Students' Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) scores

The 1997 ITBS scores were available for the19 students who were in the district during the 1997-98 school year. For those students, the median Reading Vocabulary, median Reading Comprehension, and median Reading Total scores were all in the third quartile. All 23 subjects took the 1998 ITBS at Anywhere. The median Reading Vocabulary score for 1998 was in the second quartile. The mean score was 46.17 for all 23 subjects or 48.05 for the 19 students who also took the ITBS at Anywhere in 1997. The median 1998 Reading Comprehension score was 56, placing it in the third quartile. The median 1998 Reading Total was 50, placing it in the second quartile. The median vocabulary score and the median Reading Total scores both dropped from the third quartile in 1997 to the second quartile in 1998. Looking at the change from the 1997 scores to the 1998 scores for the 19 subjects who took both tests at Anywhere, the median change (derived by subtracting the 1997 score from the 1998 score) in all three reading areas was a negative score.

Five students had positive score changes in the area of Reading Vocabulary from 1997 to 1998. Laura was a seventh grader, the other four were eighth graders. Three of these students were girls (Laura, Susan, and Wilma) and two were boys (Henry and Ned). Fourteen students had negative score changes. This means that 14 of these students scored lower in Reading Vocabulary in 1998 than they did in 1997. Ten of these students scored 13 to 30 points lower than they did the year before in the same category. The median

(half of the scores are above this score and half of the scores are below this score) change score in the area of Reading Vocabulary was negative thirteen. The mean vocabulary score in 1997 was 58.63. The mean vocabulary score (all 23 subjects) in 1998 was 46.17. The 1998 mean vocabulary score of the same 19 subjects, who also took the ITBS in Anywhere, Iowa in 1997, was 48.05. This represented a 10.58 drop of mean scores from 1997 to 1998 on the same subtest taken by the same students. A group score of 48.05 in Vocabulary also confirmed that these students were capable of reading, as they scored solidly within the average range.

On the Reading Comprehension subtest of the ITBS, one student had no change from her 1997 score to her 1998 score. Five students scored higher in 1998 than they did in 1997 (four to 13 points higher). These students were all eighth graders. Four of the students were boys (Avery, James, Quentin, and Robert) and one was a girl (Theresa). Three of these boys (James, Quentin and Robert) also had positive score changes in Total Reading. Thirteen students scored lower in 1998 than they did in 1997 (three to 42 points lower). The mean score of the 19 subjects taking the 1997 ITBS at Anywhere was 62.84. The mean score of these same students on this same test in 1998 was 53.84. This represented a drop from 1997 to 1998 of 9.00 points. The mean score of all 23 subjects in Reading Comprehension in 1998 was 51.78. The median change in score for Reading Comprehension from 1997 to 1998 was a negative seven. All

of these scores were solidly within the average range, indicating that these students as a group were capable readers.

Four students had positive changes on Total Reading scores from 1997 to1998. Each of these students had a positive score change of two points. All the students with positive changes in their Total Reading score were eighth graders, three were boys (James, Quentin, and Robert)and one was a girl (Susan). The three boys each had a positive change in Reading Comprehension also. Susan also had a positive change in Reading Vocabulary. Fifteen students had negative score changes, ranging from a negative one to negative 38. The median score change in the area of Total Reading scores was negative five. The mean Total Reading score for 1997 was 62.42. The mean Total Reading score for these same 19 students in 1998 was 52.26, representing a mean change of a negative 10.16 points. The mean 1998 Total Reading score of all 23 subjects was 50.04. Group scores of 50 (using Iowa norms) or above confirmed that these students were capable readers.

Understanding of themselves as a good reader

One of the criteria used to select these students as subjects was that the students rated themselves as being a good reader. It was therefore important to learn what the students considered to be a good reader.

When asked how they knew they were a good reader, students reported that good readers know most of the words and/or read fluently. Avery, Henry, Theresa, and Eugene felt they were good readers because they know most of

the words. Henry stated, "I just see something that I think I'd like to read, [and] I read it." Carl, Forrest, Ian, James, and Mike related reading speed or fluency to being a good reader. Carl reported, "I'm an okay reader. I don't read really fast, but I don't read slow and I don't like stutter on words that much, hardly ever, like once or twice." Oliver believed he was a good reader because he could read aloud in class.

Summary

Anywhere Middle School is a very organized school environment. The school building itself is clean and tidy. The building schedule is arranged to minimize interactions between students of different grade levels in an effort to reduce confusion in the hallways between classes. A number of programs (mentors, Student Assistance Team, at-risk, special education) are in place to insure that all students have the opportunity to be successful within this system. The typical subject of this study was an eighth grade boy with at least average reading abilities who doesn't very often read a book. Most of the subjects remembered being read to when they were younger and learning how to read. The majority of the subjects had pleasant memories of both of these activities. Most of the subjects missed a little less than a week of school during the previous school year and had at least a "B" grade point average. The most recent ITBS reading scores of the majority of these students were lower than those they earned the previous year.

Themes

The following five themes (freedom of selection, time allocation, peer relationships, reading attitudes, and reading habits) emerged from the subjects' stories about why they chose not to read. The number one reason these subjects provided for why they chose not to read was lack of freedom of selection. The themes of time and peer relationships reflected students' desire for freedom to make selections about how they spend their time and with whom they spend their time. These subjects wanted to select books that they found more appealing or they opted to spend their leisure time with their friends. The themes of reading attitudes and reading habits center around selections these students make. I will now examine each of the themes in more detail.

Freedom of Selection

The most frequently cited reason for not reading, was the lack of freedom to select. The students in this study did read, but they reported liking to have some say in what it was they read. Freedom to select responses fell into three general categories: reading material format (i.e., books, magazines, newspapers), genre and/or favorite authors, and strategies for selecting books. Students did not want to be told they had to read "this". Students wanted the freedom to select what they would read, what format they would use to read, and how they would select their reading materials.

Reading material format

The 23 students of this study reported reading a variety of material formats, for a variety of reasons. The responses reported here reflect the reading the students did at home or outside of school. Reading formats mentioned by the subjects included magazines, newspapers, computer/Internet, books, and reading on television. These formats are discussed in order according to the frequency with which they were named by students. Subjects mentioned reading magazines the most.

Nineteen of the 23 students indicated a preference for reading magazines. (Only Carl, Ian, and Ken did not mention preferring the magazine format. They instead talked about the genre they preferred to read.) The shorter format of stories in magazines appealed to six students. Eugene said, "I'll read stuff out of magazines that are real short and everything, but probably not a book." This was supported by Forrest, James, and Penny who all preferred magazines because "they're shorter." James concurred. He enjoyed magazines because "there are usually short articles. I like to read about what's going on in athletic events and people." Wilma reported, "There are certain kinds of reading I guess I like. I don't like to read books though. I like to read magazines sometimes, but not long articles, just short ones."

Other appealing characteristics of the magazine format included current (about things happening now) information geared toward teen interests, and color photographs. Henry reported liking sports magazines because "it's all

about sports and it's got pictures of the people I like." Ned preferred magazines because they have "interesting facts and stuff I am interested in. Books don't really relate to anything I like." Oliver reported, "I just think they [magazines] are funner to read because they have pictures in color and they have a lot of stuff about different people, not just one person like a book."

Quentin preferred magazines because "they are more interesting because they are more current. They have easier print. They get them out quicker. Because it's newer, it's more interesting. It's good to read about stuff that is happening, not stuff that happened." Robert liked to read for information, especially about fishing. "It's easy language, like in *Field and Stream,* and tells you how to catch them--like when's the best time and stuff. That's why I like reading magazines."

Gwen added that magazines "have articles about teens now a days." Emily suggested "magazines tell stuff that usually happens in life. . . People talk about their feelings that way and it really gets through to us." Laura preferred magazines because "there's a lot of articles written by kids in there, and pictures by kids, and there's about celebrities, and stuff about what goes on in people's lives."

Penny said, "the pages are brighter [in magazines] so I guess that catches my attention more." Wilma said magazines are "more interesting. I think it is how they write for people my age and they write bigger. It's not real small and catches my eye. . . [I like] the writing style." Victor preferred

magazines because "they show pictures." He read "mostly the captions under the pictures." Popular magazine selections included *ESPN* or *Sports Illustrated* and *Teen* or *YM (Young Miss)*.

Another favored format for reading material was the newspaper. Ben, Mike, Oliver, and Eugene talked about reading the sports section of the newspaper. Oliver said, "Sometimes I like to read the newspaper so I can . . . see how the scores went." "Yeah, I look through there and read about everything that went on," said Eugene. Ned also read the newspaper, but with a different intent. "I like to see what's going on with farmers around the area and see how their crops are going."

Quentin preferred the comic strips. Emily sometimes read the newspaper "when I want to know something, like when the mall burnt down." Wilma read "only certain things [in the newspaper], like about the mall, and stuff that is going on in my community." Victor related reading the police reports in the newspaper "to see who is in there [and] if I know anybody in there." Susan reported reading all the local newspaper during study hall, so she "doesn't get into trouble for having nothing to do."

Ben, Carl, Emily, Henry, Ian, Oliver, and Wilma talked about reading at the computer and/or Internet. Ben found being on the Internet to be an appealing reading format because "I go from web site to web site. I can chat to other people in the room and look up people and stuff like that." Wilma reported that "when you are like in a chat room you have to read a lot and when you go to

some web site you have to read a lot of things. I guess it's [being in a chat room] more talking rather than reading. I think that it's a lot funner than reading something somebody wrote. I guess it's more carrying on a conversation, asking questions."

Carl said reading on the computer is "easier to get to. Like if you want to look up an assignment, you just look it up. It's easy." Henry concurred. "I like that [reading on the computer] better because I can get other articles easy. It's quicker." That thought was echoed by Oliver who stated, "I read stuff that comes up on the Internet and stuff like that. I think it has a lot more detail and if you don't like it you can just go to something else and I can't really do that with books cuz I don't have a whole lot of them in the house."

Laura and Mike reported reading books. Mike was reading a "chapters reading book," or what he described as a book that has several chapters, more like a novel. Laura was presently reading two books: one for a class assignment and the other for free reading. She said she reads "pretty much every day, 'cause I try to keep up on my things." Ian said, "I might just look through a comic book and read the captions."

David and Victor reported reading on TV. Victor further explained, "like on the Wildlife channel, they have stuff on there to read." He told me that words are printed on the screen and he reads them. Likewise, David related that the only time he reads if it isn't for an assignment, it is "small stuff, but not for enjoyment. Like if something flashes on the TV screen, you have to read it, or

from looking on the calendar. It will say like Christmas or something. Just words I see."

Other reasons cited for reading included "learning to do something" and reading to a younger sibling. However, only one student cited each of the above reasons. Ned stated, "I learned about how to put models together and stuff by reading." Carl said, "well sometimes when I'm with my sister [she is three years old] and she like has books and stuff and she has no one to talk to or anything, so I like go in there and read with her."

In general, the students preferred reading material that was presented in a succinct format. They appreciated the current information they accessed from reading magazines, newspapers, or off the Internet. The short length of the stories in these formats as well as access to color photographs made these formats appealing to these adolescents who preferred not to read. These students read to gain information, whether it be sports scores, fashion trends, current events, or how to do something.

Genre

Another area where students expressed a desire for choice was in selecting the type or genre of reading material. Mysteries appeared to be the genre of choice in this group. Eight of 23 students (Ben, Ian, James, Ken, Mike, Robert, Susan, and Theresa) named mystery as the factor that made a book appeal to them. James said, "In a book I like it when there is a big event. Like I

have been reading for a long time, then something suddenly happens." Ken reported that mystery books have "different stuff happening all the time."

Gwen and Ian requested both horror and mystery in their selections. Gwen thought they [horror and mystery stories] "are fun to read cuz you're put into suspense when you are reading them. You just got to read more, to see what happens." David, Forrest, and Theresa opted for scarey books. Avery, Carl, David, Gwen, and Victor each expressed a preference for science fiction stories. Forrest indicated that he selected either mystery or science fiction books "because you kind of have to think. They are fun to read."

Ian, Ken, Penny, and Wilma indicated an interest in sports stories. They each indicated that they liked the sport that was central to the story they had read. Ian stated that he "reads the stuff in there [*Sports Illustrated*] about like football, like the quarterbacks and how they do their stuff, . . . running backs." James just finished reading a biography of Mickey Mantle. "It was about a real great athlete and I like sports a lot. I just thought it was neat to hear about his real life."

David, Forrest, Henry, and Wilma expressed a preference for humorous stories. Carl named Shel Silverstein as his favorite author because, "He's funny [and] the poems are funny." Ben, Emily, Gwen, and Laura selected books about relationships. Some of these were family relationships and others were romantic relationships. Gwen, James, and Mike selected action books.

Laura preferred to read autobiographies. "Most of the ones I read are about people my age. It's good to read about what everybody else went through and stuff, because sometimes you have to go through the same things yourself." Quentin said, "I like stuff that is true. I just like to know more of what's happening." Likewise, Ben usually read to get information. Victor mentioned reading the dictionary to get information. Ned liked to read nonfiction books. "Science [reading] is neat because you kinda need that to know what's around you. Social studies, I like that because you learn about the past and how things were achieved. I like the stories to be true."

An element of suspense appeared to attract the interest of these youthful readers. Their top genre choices included mysteries, scarey stories, and science fiction in that order.

Favorite author

Closely tied to the issue of genre, is the topic of favorite author. The students expressed a desire for freedom to select books written by their favorite author. There was little agreement among the students concerning who they selected as their favorite author. David, Forrest, Gwen, Laura, and Theresa all named R.L. Stine as their favorite author. (Laura also mentioned Judy Blume and Laura Ingalls as favorites.) However, Ian, Oliver, Victor, and Wilma all indicated that they use to read R.L. Stine books, but now they don't. Ian said, "I don't really read those anymore. I guess I got too old to read them. They seem like they would be like kid books or something like that." Wilma stated, "I guess I

just grew out of him [R.L. Stine]. I used to read the small chapter books, then I just quit reading them I read most of them, so I already knew what was going to happen. It was basically the same thing." This sentiment was shared by Oliver. "And that R.L. Stine guy. I used to read a lot of his Goosebumps books. But . . . the new ones they come out with aren't very good anymore. They are just kind of repeats of the old ones that they changed the words in and put a different picture on the front cover. . . . Sometimes it seems like it gets boring after a while. Like, I've already read this [so now I don't read his books anymore]."

"I like K.A. Applegate. She is the author of the Animorphs books, the series. I like those," reported Oliver. Henry concurred with that evaluation. "She writes animal books and alien stories. Except they're not really tough to read. They're just pretty good books. It's like kids my age and it tells like what they have to do to save the world and stuff."

Mike, Ned, and Eugene preferred the literary style of Gary Paulsen. Eugene liked his books because they were "about nature and stuff. I can relate to that." Mike added, "I like animals. I think they are interesting." Ned stated, "He [Gary Paulsen] talks about ranching and stuff and I like that. I live on a farm with cows and stuff so I can relate to that." Henry did not name a favorite author, but said, "I like wilderness stuff." Robert reported, "I like animals and the mystery books. You can get into it, you can go with it–go with the flow. They get exciting. You know how the characters feel. I've been like that [into the flow of a book], but I don't remember what book it was."

A variety of other authors were each mentioned by one student. They ranged from the Berenstein Bears' author to Mary Higgins-Clark to Stephen King. The point being made here is that these students like to select the books they read. They didn't all like the same things. Gwen expressed it this way. "I don't read because the teachers put too many assignments on me to read and I don't like to read if it's assigned to me, cuz you have to read it. I want to read it because I want to."

The favorite authors cited by many students included R.L. Stine and K.A. Applegate who wrote the Goosebumps and Animorph series respectively. The writing style of these two authors and the characteristics of the genre named as favorite all include some form of suspense.

The next most popular selection involved relationships. Gary Paulsen writes about the relationship between his heroes and nature. Sports stories also revolve around relationships (to other team members, to the coach, to opposing team members, to family members, etc.). There is always an interaction among at least two people involved in a sports story. The other most frequently mentioned genre selection was humor. Humor involves the relationship of individuals, groups, or words. The humor evolves out of the relationship that exists between the various elements of the story or joke.

Strategies for selecting a book

So how do these students select the books they are going to read? Six of the 23 students (Ben, David, Ned, Oliver, Eugene, and Victor) said that they look

at the cover. Ben said, "I look at the cover. If it looks good, I read it." Ned said, "I bought the book from the cover, because the cover looked interesting. I see one [a book] that I like the cover, and then read the back." Oliver concurred. "I didn't really know like what to read, so I just kind of picked ones out that looked like I'd like. I'd read the back of 'um and if they sounded good I'd like take them out and open them up to the middle and read like maybe two or three pages to see how it had action in it. . . then if I liked the idea of it I just kind of start from the beginning and read it."

Eugene looked for a book by the thickness. "I don't really like to read that much. I usually read the backs, read paragraphs and stuff and see if that's something I want to read. I want something that would take time, but not a couple weeks." Emily began her search for a book at the card catalog. She described the task of finding a book to read in this way. "Go to the library. It doesn't have to be big or small. Go to that card index or whatever. Think of a subject you want to read about and find it in there. Choose a few and then go over to the aisle and then look at all of them and see which one would suit you." Gwen found the books she wanted to read by watching TV. "Sometimes they come on TV, like the movie and everybody says the books are better than the movie. I think they are too, 'cause the movies, they leave parts out and don't get down to detail like the books."

The most frequently identified means of selecting a book was to look at the cover. Students sometimes read the back cover and/or passages throughout the book to help them decide whether this book is the one they want to read.

Summary

Students consistently expressed a desire to have freedom to select what they read. They expressed a desire for freedom to select the format and genre of materials they read. Magazine reading was the favorite format, because their sense was that the stories are short, topics are current and about things they felt they could relate to. Newspapers also were popular because students perceived that they are current, contain information people are looking for, and are organized into short articles. Reading on the computer was a favorite format for several students. The easy availability of desired material and ability to access new or additional materials quickly appealed to many of the middle school readers. Students also read books, words in the environment, to learn to do something, or to read to a younger sibling.

The most frequently mentioned genre was mystery, followed by horror, science fiction, nature, humor, action, and sports. Several students expressed a preference for nonfiction stories. R.L. Stine and K.A. Applegate were the most frequently read authors, but Gary Paulsen also was a favorite. The most frequently mentioned method for selecting a book was by looking at the cover, followed by reading the back cover and randomly selected passages throughout the book.

Time Allocation

As students enter middle school, the issue of time and how they opt to spend their available time becomes an issue. The ways in which they select to spend their time indicate their priorities and reflect their attitudes. In this section I examine the students' perceptions of how much time is available for reading, how much time they spend reading at school, for homework, and for pleasure, and how they spend their free time if they are not reading.

Lack of time

When asked why they chose not to read, many of the students cited a lack of time. There were two different interpretations of a lack of time. The first (and largest number) group of students said they chose not to read because they didn't have time, because other activities took up too much of their time. The activities occupying their time were not options available to them when they were younger. These students felt they ran out of time to read. If they had more time available, they said they would read more. A second group of students said they didn't have time to read because there were other activities they would rather do than read. Reading was viewed by them as an undesirable (or at least less desirable) activity.

Ten of the students commented on their lack of time for reading. Five of those students (Avery, Gwen, James, Mike, and Ned) indicated that they would read more if they had more time available. Avery reported that he liked reading "when I get a chance to. Like when I'm not hanging out with my friends, I do

homework, or something like that." Gwen reported, "I don't have enough time to read. I am constantly on the go and like at the beginning of school and at the end of school I am playing soccer and I'm always over at my cousin's house and we are usually out taking walks or downtown at my grandma's store helping her out."

James said, "I just really don't have time for it [reading]. I liked being read to when I was younger. We would sit down and listen to a book every night. I like it [reading] if it is a good book. If not, then I get frustrated and just put it away." Mike indicated, "I just really don't have the time [to read]. Some books just don't interest me. I usually do a lot of stuff, 'cause in study halls I usually have work to do and after school I gotta lift weights, so I don't have time [to read]. Ned commented, "I don't like to read constantly, because I like to do other stuff, but sometimes I'll read."

David, Oliver, and Susan said they didn't have time to read more because they had homework to do. Oliver also mentioned that he had to "practice his trombone." Oliver reported that he read four to five hours a week, but he didn't feel he read enough.

An additional group of students also cited lack of time as a reason for not reading. However, these students indicated that they don't like to read because they have other things to do. Ben said he really didn't enjoy reading. "I guess I'd rather be out shooting baskets." Emily stated, "I have books in my locker and in my bag, but I haven't been reading them. It's just that I'm too busy with getting

all my work done before Christmas vacation and getting all the presents and like cards for my friends, and you know stuff like that. . . . I think reading is just an assignment and that there is other stuff I'd rather do." Forrest was emphatic, "[There are] better things being done [than reading]. It's wasting time." Ian commented, "I just don't really like to [read] cuz I just feel there are other things to do."

Ken shared, "I just think it [reading] takes up time. When I'm not playing football or something, I don't like to sit down and read a book while my friends are out playing football." Robert concurred, "I have books at home, but I don't read them. . . . I just don't really like to read. It's a waste of time and I like to do other things besides read. . . . but if I have to, I'll read if it will help me out with homework, or if there's nothing else I'm doing, I might read. But that's very rare if I do it for just free time."

Middle School opens up a variety of new opportunities to students. Students have access to extra curricular activities such as competitive sports, vocal and instrumental music, or club membership. Some students have jobs. Many students are allowed freedom of movement, within the community and to "hang out" with friends, that they did not have as elementary students. Along with those opportunities come additional demands on a student's time.

For some students, this results in an actual lack of time to read. If they had more time available, they believed they would read more. More than half of the students commented that they didn't have time to read. Six other students

chose to spend what time was available doing activities other than reading. Even if they had more time available, they believed they would choose to spend that time doing activities other than reading. They indicated that reading took up valuable time that could be spent doing other things.

Time spent reading in school

The information in the next three sub-sections, (time spent reading in school, time spent reading for homework, and time spent reading for fun), is a compilation of the information gathered from the reading questionnaires and the follow-up interviews. Reading in school describes the amount of time students estimate that they spend reading during school and the classes where they do the reading.

Most students felt they spent most of their reading time in school. James and David reported reading a half hour per week to twenty minutes per week respectively. Fourteen of the 23 students (Ben, Carl, Forrest, Henry, Ian, Ken, Mike, Ned, Oliver, Penny, Robert, Susan, Theresa, and Victor) reported reading half an hour or less per day in school. Quentin estimated that he "probably reads an hour all together at school per day, depending on what we are doing in class." He felt he read the most in math class. "We have to take down notes every day, so I end up reading quite a bit. I have to read the coordinates off of a graph, of a coordinate plane."

Laura reported reading at least fifteen minutes in each of six classes per day. Wilma stated that she reads a couple hours a day in language arts and

science. Eugene estimated that he read around an hour and a half to two hours per day. Most of that reading was done in language arts, "when we read out loud in class." Emily stated, "I'd say [I read] a lot, because people think reading is just words from reading class, vocab and stuff like that. But you read in every class. In science, in math, it's not words. It's numbers, but you still read that. You read in every single class."

Carl, James, Ned, Penny, Eugene, and Wilma each reported that most of their in-school reading was done in language arts. In language arts they reported reading "ledgers or something out of the book" (Penny), fables (Carl), short stories (Carl and Susan), or books (Carl and Ned). Ned said, "I have to read books and study for tests and stuff." Ben and Victor reported reading in study hall. Theresa said she read in math and history as well as language arts. Wilma read in language arts and science classes.

These students indicated that most of their reading is done at school. Most of the students reported reading a half an hour or less per day in school. The majority of that reading was completed in language arts class.

Time spent reading for homework

Doing homework was the next most frequently mentioned activity students in this study spent time doing. Most read to complete their homework. David said, "I had to read for science, to find the answers." They seemed to sense the importance of reading in the learning process. Wilma commented, "When we have reports I sometimes run into other things and I just learn, you know. It's

just connected to what I am supposed to learn." Ben, David, Ian, Ken, Laura, Mike, Robert, Theresa, and Victor also reported reading when given homework assignments.

All but two of the students said they read half an hour or less each day for homework. Laura and Victor each said they spent an hour a day reading for homework, mostly for language arts class. David, Emily, James, Ken, and Penny said they didn't do any reading for homework, although each reported getting their homework done during study hall. Forrest, Ned, Robert, Eugene, and Wilma stated that they spent an hour a week reading for homework.

Ten of the students, (Carl, Gwen, Ian, James, Ken, Mike, Ned, Penny, Theresa, and Wilma), mentioned in the course of the conversation that they frequently skim material assigned, rather than reading it in its entirety. The students had a variety of skimming methods they employed. Mike, Ned, and Penny looked for the main parts or key words in a reading selection. Wilma reported that, "Usually if we have a worksheet I will just read the question, then look for it, rather than read it all."

Carl and James developed methods of reading a page and then skipping some pages and then reading another page. Carl preferred to "read one page and skip ten, read another page. Likewise, James relayed, "If it gets boring, I don't always read the whole book. Sometimes I'll just read the first couple pages and the last couple pages. Usually that's enough to tell you what's going on."

Penny had a slightly different approach. "If given an assignment, I work with a partner. We'll split it in half so we don't have to read as much. Like I'll read half and they'll read half and they'll know what happened in that half and then I'll just skim or something." Ken admitted that skimming didn't work real well for him. He could find some of the answers that way, but he didn't really care. He replied, "I just want to get done."

The students reported that they read an average of half an hour or less per day to complete their homework. One strategy that allowed them to accomplish this task so quickly was the use of skimming, rather than reading, the passages they were assigned. It was clear from the students' responses that the goal was to complete the assignment in as little time as possible, not necessarily to learn something in the process.

Time spent reading for pleasure

Twelve of the students indicated that they never spent time reading for fun. Reading for pleasure or fun for them referred to reading that was completed because the person wanted to do it, not because it was required for a class or because somebody told you to do it.

Carl and Penny indicated that they read ten to fifteen minutes per day for fun. Carl read comics and Penny read the newspaper or magazines. Ned spent about ninety minutes a week reading about fishing, hunting, motor sports, trucks, or "how to" things. Emily and Laura sometimes read magazines. Oliver read for fun "sometimes if I have time." Susan and James occasionally read mystery

books during study hall. James also liked biographies of famous athletic people. Henry sometimes read for fun on vacation. He read maybe a book or two a year. Emily read for fun "not very often, maybe once or twice in two months when there is nothing to do and you're bored and stuff." Only Emily and Penny reported that they thought they should read more than they do. Penny stated, "I guess I should probably read a little more not just magazines, I guess. I just don't really think about it unless I sit down or someone talks to me about it or something."

More than half of the students (12 of 23) reported that they never read for pleasure. The most time any of these students reported reading for pleasure was 10 to 15 minutes per day.

Free time

When students did have free time, they engaged in using a variety of electronic media. David, Gwen, Henry, Victor, and Wilma reported that they "watch TV." Henry said, "I'm watching TV most of the time because I can see all the pictures and stuff. The things moving are funner [than reading]." Henry and Mike said they play Nintendo. Susan and Laura reported working at the computer. David said he "plays video games."

Another contingent of students preferred outdoor activities. Eugene, Forrest, Henry, and Quentin spend part of their time fishing. Forrest and Quentin enjoyed hunting. James liked to "go out and mess around in the woods." Eugene spent time with his 4-H kids [baby goats]. Oliver, Quentin, and

Victor enjoyed riding bikes [dirt bike and motorcycle] or four wheelers. Penny and Gwen rode horses. Henry liked to swim. Gwen walked or jumped on her cousin's trampoline.

Forrest, Ian, and Wilma "listened to music." Ben, Ian, and Forrest liked to draw in their free time. Ned liked to work with model cars, tractors, and his model farm. He also liked remote control cars. Forrest and Theresa reported, "I have better things to do [than read]."

Students made daily selections about how they would spend their time. For this group of students, reading was not "high on their list" of preferred free time activities. They opted to be busy with a variety of alternate activities. This group of students identified electronic media, outdoor activities, and homework as activities in which they most frequently engaged, closely followed by listening to music and drawing.

Summary

As they entered middle school, a wide array of new opportunities opened up for the students in this study. They now were being allowed to participate in activities that had previously been unavailable to them. Students reported being involved in sports, music activities, jobs, and freedom to associate with friends. As a result they had less time available to spend reading, even if they opted to allocate time for reading.

This particular group of middle school students reported that reading was not a preferred activity for them. Most of the reading they did was done at

school, in language arts class. They reported spending less than half an hour per day reading at school. More than half of the students reported that they never read for pleasure. The most that any of these students reported reading for pleasure was ten to fifteen minutes per day. Students preferred to spend their time involved with various electronic media (i.e. television, Nintendo, listening to music) or outside activities.

Peer Relationships

To many of these students, peer relationships were a first priority. When asked what they did instead of reading, Carl, David, Eugene, Forrest, Gwen, and Mike specifically said that they select to spend their time "playing sports with friends." Ben, Henry, Oliver, and Theresa spoke of playing sports with family members, normally a sibling. Twenty of the 23 subjects in this study, (all except Emily, Laura, and Wilma), reported that they participated in some form of sports. It is important to note that participating in sports at this middle school was a group activity. Students who participated in sports tended to become part of a select group. They spent more time with their peers. Football was the most frequently mentioned sport. Basketball, baseball, track, and soccer (all group sports) were mentioned multiple times.

The next most common response to what they did instead of reading was "hang out with friends." Avery said that he and his friends hang out. They "walk around or listen to music." Gwen simply stated, "I like to be with my friends." Emily suggested that "as you get older you get busy and want to hang out with

your friends more. . . . " Forrest and James both said they "spend their time with friends." James further explained that when he and his friends hang out, "he goes over to their house, they go out to the mall, or he has them over". Ian reported, "I like to go and do stuff with my friends instead of sitting home reading by myself." Quentin said , "I talk on the phone [to my friends]." Gwen and Ian both "talk with friends." Laura "talks with friends and my mom." Ben, Emily, Gwen, James, Laura, and Theresa all said they go to the movies with their friends when they "hang out".

Nine of the 23 students said they would probably read a book if their friends told them it was good. Laura, Mike, Oliver, Penny, and Susan expressed that sentiment. Henry stated, "Probably my friend [would influence me to read a book] 'cause he reads a lot of books I'd like to read." James said his friends, "every once in a while you know, just walk up and say, 'This was a real good book. Do you want to read it?' . . . . [If] my friends recommend a book and say it was real good, I usually read it." Ian shared, "They [my friends] may just basically tell me about a good book they read that was really cool and I just ask where they got it and I try to go back to see if I can get it again."

Summary

Spending time with friends appeared to be a priority for a majority of the students involved in this study. Twenty of the 23 students reported some involvement in sports activities. Eleven of the students specifically stated that they like to spend time with friends rather than reading. Three of those 11 said

they play sports with friends; eight of the 11 said they "hang out with friends"; and two of the 11 said they both play sports with and "hang out with" friends. Nine of the 23 students said their friends could influence them to read a book and seven of the 23 students said they sometimes talked to their friends about books.

Reading Attitudes

Reading attitudes refers to the students' affective feelings about reading. Entries in this theme describe how the students' feel about reading. Students were selected to be part of this study because they shared a similar attitude toward reading. They all were capable of reading but chose not to read. Many of the students reported that they just liked to do other things better than reading. As Ben stated, "I guess I have a better time doing them [other activities] than reading." Laura preferred being with her friends over reading. "Cuz it's fun. It's actually doing something. Reading, you just sit there and read and you're not actually doing that much except reading. But when you're with your friends you just do more, I guess." James stated, "I don't really like to read. I don't have a lot of time for it. Sometimes it just gets boring cause my mind will wander off. I can sit there and read and not remember what I read."

Importance of reading

Despite choosing not to read themselves, the majority of these students recognized the importance of reading in our society. Several of the students seemed to have an understanding that reading is important. Carl, Emily, Ian,

Ken, Laura, Mike, and Oliver spoke of the need to read in order to get a good job. As Carl said, "You have to read the application to get a job. It's hard to get a job without reading, because you got to read all the time."

Avery, Susan, Eugene, and Victor talked about how you learn from reading. Avery put it this way. "Cuz you learn from reading. You learn new words, sometimes new information." James , Robert, and Susan spoke of how reading makes you smarter. Susan said, "It's [reading is] good for people because it makes them smarter and helps them get through life." James added, "It [reading] is a good way to spend your time and I think it makes you smarter just reading at any age. . . kids that read and keep on reading are a lot smarter than kids that never read or don't know how. Almost everything you do, you have to know how to read."

Avery, Ben, Henry, and Ned articulated the communication values of reading. Ned mentioned, "[Reading is important] to know how to communicate. You have to read signs to catch subways and stuff." Ben said, "If you drive down a street and it says exit and you can't read that, or wrong way . . . and then like food buffets and all that, you wouldn't know what food to order. You couldn't know anything by reading the paper." Henry shared, "[Reading is important because] you can understand what is going on around the world. That way you know what to do, like if the temperature's going to be cold tomorrow, you know what to wear tomorrow."

Value of reading

These students equated reading being valued in their home to whether or not people in their house read and/or whether they have reading materials readily available in their home. I asked the questions: Do you think reading is valued at your house? How do you know? Each of the students either responded that yes, reading was valued because people at their house read regularly or no it wasn't valued because nobody ever read.

The majority of the students (15 of 23) felt that reading was valued in their home. They provided two explanations of ways in which they knew this was true. First, they saw people reading or they had a lot of reading material in their home. David, Emily, Gwen, Forrest, James, Laura, Mike, Ned, Oliver, and Penny indicated that reading was valued in their home because people (typically the mother) read frequently. For example, James said, "My mom read to me when I was younger every night. She really reads a lot. She'll read those real thick books every night. That's how she keeps herself busy." Laura shared, "Cuz my parents read for college. And my younger brother reads magazines about sports." Penny felt that reading was valued at her house, too. "My little brother like has a hard time, so we read a lot to him."

Second, they had reading materials in their home environment and they typically used these materials to gather information. Wilma stated, "We think it [reading] is important. We order magazines for certain interests like *Country Living, Teen,* and *Antique,* magazines like that. We value it I guess." Ben's

response summarized the responses of this group. "We get lots of books and magazines and stuff, the newspaper [at our home]. I know we value reading cuz we find out information from the magazines and newspapers."

Carl, Emily, Henry, Theresa, and Victor each indicated that they believed reading was not valued in their homes. They knew this because, as Theresa put it, "we just don't read that much." Henry suggested that nobody reads because "everybody is watching TV for starters. My mom's busy all the time babysitting kids and [so] she can't read. My dad's always at work."

Ian and Ken were unsure how to answer because some people read and others didn't. Ian said, "I don't really know. My dad likes to read a lot, but my mom doesn't read that much. She like reads the work she has to do, but that's usually all. My dad reads a lot of stories he gets from the library." Ken responded, "My mom has a daycare so she has to read to them and help them out." But Ken didn't feel the importance of him reading was emphasized at home. Quentin also was unsure of how to respond to the questions. He stated, "I don't know. It's not something that is really stressed. They [my parents] don't tell me to read, but if I have to read then I have to."

Fifteen of the students indicated that reading was valued in their home. They knew it was valued because they saw people reading and they had reading materials readily available in their home. The students realized that people who spend time reading do so because they feel it is an important activity. When the

students did not see family members reading on a regular basis they assumed that reading was not a valued activity in that household.

Previously enjoyed reading

The majority of these students indicated that they enjoyed reading when they were younger, but now they rarely read. Five students (Emily, Gwen, James, Oliver, and Penny) indicated that they liked to read when they were younger and family members read to them. Penny's mom used to read *Cinderella* to her. "Reading was more fun then." Eventually her mom quit reading to her and then Penny didn't like reading any more because she had to do it by herself. James shared, "When I was younger I used to like my mom reading to me at night. I'd pick out books for her to read over and over."

The students described special moments that involved reading with an adult. For instance, Gwen described, her "grandpa would sit me on his lap and let me read. He's the one that taught me to read." Those reading moments provided an opportunity for Gwen and her grandpa to spend time together. They were isolated from the rest of the world during that time.

Carl, Ken, Laura, Mike, Quentin, and Susan all indicated that reading used to be fun. Eventually they wanted to do more active things. Carl, Ken, and Quentin quit reading when they became more active in sports. Carl liked to read until he was about ten years old. He liked to read then because there was "nothing better to do." That has now changed for Carl because he has "found better stuff to do." According to Carl that better stuff was sports. Laura said

things changed for her when she went to middle school. "I started doing things that were more interesting than reading. I like to do more things that are like more active. I get easily bored now, so I have to always be doing something like playing a sport or doing something really active." Susan started showing her horses and projects at the fair, and just "being more active" in fifth grade.

Emily, Ken, Robert, and Wilma indicated that as they grew older reading was no longer a challenge for them. It became boring. Ken said, "When I started to read it was a challenge. And now that I can read it's like I don't want to. I stopped reading about third grade when I got more involved with sports." Wilma stated, "I just think I got bored with it (reading). I think we were just like in the process of learning so it was a lot more fun then and now it is kinda boring because we already know how to read and we've read a lot of things." Robert, quit reading "probably about fifth grade. It just wasn't fun anymore. It just got old I guess."

Forrest felt reading became less fun in fourth grade "when you have to do it for assignments, or 'Book It', or something." One young man (Ned) said he moved to a new school in third or fourth grade. "All the new teachers didn't let us read, let us read less and I didn't read as much." Victor reported that in fourth grade, "I got a new bike. [I] just didn't like to read anymore. [I] wanted to ride my bike."

James and Robert indicated that now they would rather watch TV than read. David and Ben preferred to be with their friends. David reported that he

liked to read when he was "five or six years old," because he didn't have as many friends. When he got to fourth grade that changed because he met a lot more people when he moved to a different school. Likewise, Ben stated, "I really couldn't hang out with my friends in second grade. [Now] I'm always with my friends or doing something."

Ian reported that reading "use to be cool cuz you didn't know what was going to happen on the next page." During the interview he said that he still believes reading is "okay," but it went from being "cool" to being "okay" "when they invented Super Nintendo. . . ."

Four students (Avery, Henry, Theresa, and Eugene) had negative memories about early reading experiences. Eugene had painful memories of learning to read. He stated, "I remember in first grade when I couldn't read very good and other people could. I didn't want to say anything. I was kind of embarrassed I guess." For the other students, the initial positive feelings towards reading began to change when reading was no longer a challenge or as they discovered other activities that appeared to be more fun.

The majority of the students enjoyed reading when they were younger. Several described special moments that involved reading with an adult. As they grew older, some felt they wanted to do more active things. Other students felt reading no longer provided a challenge.

Types of reading

For some students, their attitude about reading was at least partially determined by what type of material they were being asked to read. There were differences of opinions concerning which types of reading, (reading for information or reading a novel), were the easiest. Five students felt it was easier to read a novel. An equal number of students felt it was easier to read for information. Three students saw these two types of reading as being of equal difficulty.

Avery, Ben, Henry, Ian, and Oliver felt reading for information was harder than reading a novel. "There are a lot of long words and stuff that it's kind of hard to sound out," said Oliver. Ian said, "It's harder because you have to look for an answer. You have to go through the whole thing piece by piece." Henry reported, "I think it's harder cuz you are reading about stuff you don't really know." "It's harder [because] with other books I know what's going on, but looking at just information I just forget, so I have to take notes," said Ben.

Carl, David, Emily, Forrest, and Eugene felt reading for information was easier than reading a novel. Carl said "it's easier because you know what you are looking for and you know where to find it." Emily said, "it's much easier. . . we know what the questions are ahead of time and usually on book reports like Wait Until Helen Comes, you get the questions after, so you have to read the whole thing over again to see what you're looking for." Forrest reported, "it's easier cuz you are just skimming for important facts, not really reading."

Mike, Penny, Robert, and Susan thought reading for information and reading a novel were about the same in difficulty. Students mentioned a variety of sources they used when reading for information. Ten students said they used books, seven used encyclopedias, four used dictionaries, two used computers and two used the Internet. Directions, handouts, magazines, and newspapers all were sources of information students mentioned referencing.

There was no clear preference concerning which type of reading was easiest. Half of the students responding (five of ten) felt it was easier to read for information. Half of the students felt it was easier to read a novel. There was a lot of variation in what sources students utilized when they read for information.

Summary

Even though this group of students had an overall negative attitude towards reading, they did recognize the importance of reading. Some attributed the importance of reading to attaining a job, others attributed gaining knowledge to one's ability to read. Yet others spoke of the importance of reading in communication, and of learning how to do something. Students shared how reading impacts their everyday lives including reading street signs, ordering from a menu, and staying abreast of worldwide current events.

Most of the students felt reading was valued in their household. They knew this because they witnessed family members reading on a regular basis and/or there were a lot of reading materials available in their home. All but four of the students remembered believing that reading was fun when they were

younger, but felt that reading began to lose its appeal as they discovered other activities. Reading became less of a challenge to them. This phenomenon happened for the group in the upper elementary grades or when they entered middle school. Five students felt that reading fiction was easier than reading nonfiction. Another five students felt reading fiction was harder than reading nonfiction.

Reading Habits

I selected students because they were capable of reading but chose not to read. This fact was evident in their responses regarding reading habits. Reading habits was the category name used to describe the habits the students developed concerning reading. I included information on whether or not students carried reading materials with them on a daily basis, as well as information about whether or not they discussed what they read with friends, teachers, or family members.

Carried reading materials

Only five students had reading material with them at the time of the interview. Oliver and Laura had books they were reading for class. Gwen, Laura, and Ned had books they were reading for pleasure. Avery had magazines he was reading. Thirteen of the students did not have any reading material with them. Gwen, Laura, Eugene, and Wilma knew of a book they would like to read. Nineteen of the students didn't know of anything they would like to read in the future.

Read at home yesterday

Fourteen subjects reported that they did not read at home yesterday, while nine subjects reported reading at home yesterday. Some subjects reported reading more than one type of material yesterday. Gwen, Quentin, and Wilma reported reading magazines; Wilma read advice columns; and Quentin read a sports magazine; Ben, Ned, and Eugene read newspapers; Ned read about farming; and Ben and Eugene read about sports. Gwen and Laura reported reading books and David, Forrest, and Mike reported reading assignments. David also reported reading words on TV.

Avery, David, Victor, and Wilma reported that they didn't read at all. Others reported reading only "at school" or "if we have an assignment." Henry reported reading once every two months. Those who read more reported frequencies of reading at least once or twice a week (Laura), three to four books a month (Susan), 30 minutes a night (Mike), four to five hours a week (Oliver). Susan said she read magazines "all the time."

In summary, very few students carried reading materials with them on a regular basis. The majority of these students had not read at home the previous day. When they did read at home, it was most likely leisure reading. Only three students reported reading at home the previous day for homework.

Discussed books

My sense is that when students are actively engaged in an activity they may be likely to discuss the activity with their friends. I asked these students if they ever discussed something they had read with their friends or anybody else.

Eleven of the students (Avery, David, Eugene, Forrest, James, Laura, Oliver, Penny, Theresa, Victor, and Wilma) said they sometimes told friends about good books or articles they read. Laura said, "If I am reading a really good book, I'll sometimes suggest it." "Me and one of my other friends would talk before reading class starts. . . . Me and my friend, we usually talk about her book," reported Emily. Eugene shared, "Some of my friends that play basketball and stuff . . . have that magazine [*ESPN*] so they just go home and read it when I tell them about an interesting basketball article."

Students in this study also mentioned that teachers were partners with them as they discuss books. Oliver reported "writing letters and things back and forth with his language arts teacher. I'll write in my letter what parts [of the book/story] I liked and what made me like it and stuff. . . the book kind of relates to some of the things that happen with my life." Likewise, Eugene said, "I read a lot of sports magazines, like *ESPN* and everything, and if there is an interesting basketball article or something I thought she'd [my language arts teacher] like to hear about, I'd tell her.

Avery, Ben, Forrest, Laura, Quentin, and Eugene said that family members can get them really excited about a book. Ben and Quentin took

advice from their brothers. When Ben's younger brother told him about a book that he had read, then Ben also read it. Quentin trusted his brother to tell him about good articles he reads in car magazines. If his brother told him he should read an article, then Quentin read it. Avery's sister "tells me how good the book is and that I should read it and stuff like that." Forrest, Laura, and Eugene said their parents provided sound advice about reading material. Laura said, "My mom . . . the books she reads, they are not really boring books. They are all adventure books and stuff. So she'll suggest adventure books and fun books."

Wilma reported that she would read if her friends told her about a book, but that never happened. "I guess I'm just getting older. I just want to be with my friends. I don't want to read. None of my friends really read that much. If they did, and told me about it, I guess I would read, too. They don't really talk about it [reading]. That's not one of our interests I guess." Emily, Forrest, Gwen, Henry, Mike, and Eugene all said their friends could get them excited about a book. Henry had a friend who liked to read *Animorph* books. "We just tell each other what they are about and tell them whether we should read it or not." Henry and Mike also reported that their teacher could get them excited about reading a book by telling them part, but not all, of what happened in the book.

Twelve of the students reported that they didn't talk to their friends about what they read. Ned even laughed when I asked the question. He said, "We don't really talk about school that much. We talk about stuff out of school like

hunting and fishing." Students didn't provide a reason for why reading discussions with their friends did not take place. They simply stated that they didn't talk about reading.

Eleven of the students reported that they sometimes discussed what they had read with their friends, family, or a teacher. Some indicated that they might read something that was recommended in that type of discussion. The other twelve students indicated that they never discussed reading with anyone.

Summary

Few of the students in this study carried reading materials with them. If they read at home, the reading generally consisted of magazines or newspapers, rather than books. The majority of students reported that they did read when it was assigned by a teacher or for a class assignment. Some students however resorted to skimming assignments rather than reading materials in their entirety. Almost half of these students reported that they sometimes talked about books or articles they had read with friends. Others said they might discuss reading opportunities with teachers and family members.

Closing

In Chapter 4 I provided background information about the school and the students who participated in the study. I also described the five themes that emerged from the subjects' stories about why they chose not to read. Those themes were freedom to select, time allocation, peer relationships, reading attitudes, and reading habits.

Chapter 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study is to contribute to a better understanding of why middle school students who are capable of reading, choose not to read. I used semi-structured interviews to gather the qualitative data base. The study was designed to answer the question: Given the subject selection criteria, why do middle school students choose not to read? What factors impact whether or not they read?

Detailed descriptions of the subjects' responses were presented in Chapter 4. Five themes evolved from the analysis of the subjects' responses. These five themes included freedom to select, time allocation, peer relationships, reading attitudes, and reading habits.

Discussion

When asked why they chose not to read, the three responses the subjects most frequently provided were lack of freedom to select, lack of time, and a desire to be with peers. Freedom to select appears to be an umbrella concept in this situation. Time allocation, desire to be with peers, and reading attitudes all address the issue of how these adolescents are selecting to spend their time. Peer relationships are incorporated into the concepts of selection, time allocation, and reading habits. The students' desire to be in peer relationships influence the selections they make, how they decide to spend their time, and the

reading habits they develop. Their reading habits are a reflection of their reading attitudes.

Freedom to Select

The most frequently cited reason provided by the subjects of this study for not reading, was lack of freedom to select. They expressed a desire for freedom (a) to select the format of their reading materials, (b) to select what they read, and (c) in selecting the strategies they used when picking out a book to read. These responses are consistent with Mellon's study (1990) of seventh through twelfth grade students. Mellon concluded that most students like to read when they are not forced to read.

Magazines were the preferred format for the students in this study. Eugene reported, "I'll read stuff out of magazines that are real short and everything, but probably not a book." Ned preferred magazines because "they have interesting facts and stuff I am interested in. Books don't really relate to anything I like." Quentin preferred magazines because "they have easier print. They get them out quicker. Because it's newer, it's more interesting." Other students reported reading newspapers. Likewise, Mellon (1990) reported that "magazines and newspapers were the all-time favorite reading material of teens" (p. 224).

Students in this study also reported reading at the computer and/or Internet. Henry stated, "I like that [reading on the computer] better because I can get other articles easy. It's quicker." Oliver added, "I read stuff that comes

up on the Internet and stuff like that. I think it has a lot more detail and if you don't like it you can just go to something else and I can't really do that with books cuz I don't have a whole lot of them in the house." I did not find research to validate the preference for reading electronic media among middle school students. Ready access to this type of technology is new enough that it may not yet be reflected in the published literature.

Traw (1993) found that eighth grade students' recreational reading took place within the following genre (in descending frequency): teen issues, romance, mystery/suspense, supernatural/horror, fantasy, and science fiction. My findings were similar. Mysteries appeared to be the genre of choice. This was followed by scarey books (horror), science fiction, sports, humor, and relationships. The results, though not exact, were similar to Traw's. Results from my study may have been influenced by the over-representation (16 of 23) of boys in the subject group. Traw found that girls were more likely to read romance novels or teen issue books than were boys. My results more closely matched those of Rinehart et al. (1998) who reported that both boys and girls like thriller, sports, humor, and action books.

Students offered explanations for why they selected the types of books they did. Forrest indicated that he selected either mystery or science fiction books "because you kind of have to think." Gwen reported that she selected horror or mystery books because "you're put into suspense when you are reading them. You just got to read more, to see what happens."

When it came to selecting books, the subjects in this study said that they judge the book by its cover. Ben offered this straight forward explanation of how he selects a book to read. "I look at the cover. If it looks good, I read it." This finding is consistent with the findings of the Rinehart et al. (1998) study which concluded that eighth grade students rely mostly on the back of the book summary to select books.

Nine of the 23 subjects in this study said they would probably read a book if their friends told them it was good. Seven of the subjects also indicated that they sometimes talk to their friends about books. This is consistent with the findings of other recent studies. Johnson-Kuby and Katz (1996) found that students rely mostly on suggestions from friends when selecting a book to read. Rinehart et al. (1998) also found that students read books that friends recommend and they often recommend books to others.

The subjects in my study related feeling they do not have enough time to read. The students wanted to select how they were going to spend their time. There seemed to be more appealing options than reading for students in this study. Most of these other options involved their peer group. They related liking to "hang out" with their friends. At other times they participated in organized sports activities with their friends. Clearly, they wanted the freedom to select what they read. Opting not to read, for these middle school students, was summarized as issues of freedom to select, time allocation, and a desire to

foster peer relationships taking precedence over reading. These options were then reflected in the students' reading attitudes and habits.

Time

Students reported that "time" was the next most frequent reason why they did not read. The concept of time was interpreted differently by different subjects. Some students reported that they had too many demands upon their time, leaving no time available to read. Gwen reported, "I don't have enough time to read. I am constantly on the go." Other students indicated that they would rather spend their available time doing other things, besides reading. As Forrest stated, "[There are] better things being done [than reading]." I found little research, especially with middle school aged subjects, that address why students who are capable of reading choose not to read.

Goodlad (1984) reported that middle school students spend very little time (only 3%) in school actually engaged in reading. The findings of the current study are consistent with those of Goodlad's study. Although the subjects of this study varied widely in their estimations of how much of their school time was spent engaged in reading, they did agree that they spent very little of their time (an average of half an hour or less per day) in school reading.

The selection criteria for the subjects of this study insured that these were students who did very little recreational reading. Twelve of the students indicated that they never spent time reading for fun. The most time any of these students reported reading for pleasure was 10 to 15 minutes per day. These

findings are consistent with the results of Greaney's study (1980) where the sample of fifth grade students spent only 5.4 percent of their leisure time engaged in reading; results of McEady-Gillead's study (1989) of sixth graders that showed "a substantial number of adolescents do not choose to read either for pleasure or for information" (p. 1); and results of Johns' study (1978) that showed by "ninth grade, 90 percent of the reading is done by 10 percent of the students" (p. 69).

Fuligni (2000) reported that high school students spend most of their leisure time socializing with friends, playing sports, or watching television. Shapiro and Whitney (1997) reported that fourth and fifth grade students spend their leisure time activities (in descending frequency) "watching TV, playing with friends (i.e., 'Me and my friends hung out'), sports, board games, and video games" (p. 359). Likewise, 20 of the 23 subjects in this study participated in some form of sports activity. These middle school students also placed a high priority on "hanging out with friends." They opted to spend their time with peers, whether "hangin' out" or involved in organized sports. Ian summarized his feeling this way. "I like to go and do stuff with my friends instead of sitting home reading by myself." These findings reinforce the contention that students (of at least upper elementary age) are opting to spend their leisure time involved in activities (usually involving peers) other than reading. They find activities other than reading to be more appealing ways to spend time.

Philosophical Responses

As far back as 1893, educators and researchers recognized the uniqueness of the early adolescent youth and the need to develop a curriculum that responded to their needs. With the formation of the junior high schools in the early 1900s, followed by introduction of the middle school concept in the 1960s, educators continued to respond to the call for innovative measures to improve the educational experience provided for these students. During the last fifteen years there has been an explosion of research suggesting how to best meet the needs of middle school students (Carpenter, 2000).

Cognitive constructivism is the philosophy of learning upon which much of the research centers. The middle school philosophy and the whole language philosophy are examples of educational initiatives built upon the philosophy of cognitive constructivism. These philosophies are centered around the belief that each learner brings individual experiences to bear on each learning situation. Therefore, there cannot be a "one-size fits all" approach to effective education.

If schools are being directed by the philosophies of cognitive constructivism, middle school, and whole language, educators might use instructional delivery tools such as thematic units, literature circles, and cooperative learning. They might take into consideration the research on multiple intelligences and brain based learning as they planned educational instruction. We might anticipate that students would be afforded a lot of time to read, a lot of choice in selecting what they wanted to read, and that they would

have ample opportunities to interact with peers. We might also anticipate that the educational innovations suggested in the literature during the last 15 to 25 years might have positively impacted the educational experiences that today's middle school students are receiving. If the research on these innovations is correct and if educators understand these philosophical foundations, we would assume that students would be actively engaged in the learning process. Instruction would be aligned with student's learning styles. Schools would be student-centered, and focused on producing learning rather than covering a specified curriculum. There would probably be noticeable differences between the educational experiences of 15 to 25 years ago and the learning environment of the 1990s and 2000s. Data from this study suggest that the above assumptions may not be accurate.

At least 23 students at Anywhere Middle School were capable of reading but chose not to read. These students recognized the importance of reading, as evidenced by Susan's comment, "[Reading is] good for people because it makes them smarter and helps them get through life." The majority of these students also indicated that they enjoyed reading when they were younger, but now rarely read. If the above educational innovations were incorporated, we might assume that these students would continue reading and enjoy the reading into the middle school years.

George and Shewey (1994) offered this explanation of the situation:

> It is likely, we regret, that in 1994 there are many hundreds, perhaps thousands of middle level schools

> in America where the awakening call to reform and transformation has not yet been recognized. In these schools, students continue to be expected to learn in organizational arrangements much more appropriate for university graduate students, to struggle by themselves through the thickets of schooling and early adolescence, to motivate themselves to study a curriculum of little utility and less natural interest, in instructional circumstances that Rip Van Winkle would recognize. (p. 30)

This view continued to be prevalent in 1996 as reported by Fry and Jobe. "The historical gap between middle school theory and implementation continues to exist among middle schools" (p. 36). Holloway (1999) concluded, "Although many school districts claim to be implementing a curriculum based on constructivist reform, their implementations often fall short" (p. 86). However, George and Shewey (1994) in a review of the research on middle school education between 1985 and 1994 concluded that "when components of the middle school were determined to be effectively in place, academic achievement and student personal development benefitted" (p. 37).

Conclusions

This study yielded four conclusions. The first conclusion points to the issue of educators' responsibility to address the affective element of reading as well as the mechanics of how to read. The other three conclusions address the research question of this study and the themes that emerged from the student responses.

Conclusion 1: Students do not necessarily read outside of school.

Despite the emphasis placed on reading by our nation's leaders,

substantial numbers of Americans (youth or adults) rarely choose to read for pleasure or information in their spare time. Middle school students who quit reading, not only threaten their continued academic growth but, according to Boorstin (1984), threaten "our capacity for intelligent self-government" (p. iv).

Morrow (1986), one of the leading writers in the area of reading attitudes, suggested that one of the most prevalent goals of American education is to teach people to read. However, little emphasis is placed on developing voluntary readers. "Schools tend to teach children how to read, rather than what to read or why read at all" (Morrow, 1986, p. 164). She goes on to ask, "Do we teach reading to raise reading test scores, or to nurture youngsters who will choose to read throughout their lives?" (Morrow, 1986, p.164). In addition, Morrow (1986) contended that educators (at all levels: elementary, secondary, teacher preparation, and in-service) have a responsibility to reexamine our way of doing business. "The role of teachers in stimulating voluntary reading among children and young people is . . . potentially the most powerful of all adult influences upon the young" (Irving, 1980, p.7).

Because we know that many of our students are not going to read outside of school, we need to provide time within school for these students to read. The students in this study told us that they would read more if it was an assignment. They told us they would sometimes read if their friends told them they should read it. They also told us that most of this sharing about reading materials went on outside of class.

Conclusion 2: Middle school students say they need more freedom of selection in what they read, what format they use to read, and in how they spend their time.

Students expressed a desire for freedom in the selection of what they read. Students felt that if they were going to read, they wanted to choose what it was they spent their time reading. The other choice students mentioned as a reason for not reading was the desire to spend time building peer relationships. They wished to spend time with their friends. They viewed reading as a solo activity and they preferred being with their peers. Sometimes they were with their friends in organized sports. Other times they were with their friends doing less formal activities such as "hangin' out" or listening to music. Whatever the activity, the students expressed a need for freedom to select how their time was spent.

Conclusion 3: Middle school students opt to spend time with their peers in organized or informal activities.

Time was the primary reason given by students as a reason for why they did not read. Some students felt there just weren't enough hours in the day to do everything. Other students felt they needed to spend their time in different ways, such as "hangin' out with friends, playing sports, playing video games, or riding four-wheelers. They read when they were younger, but they feel they have that skill under control now and there are other challenges they are ready to undertake.

Conclusion 4: Middle school students' reading attitudes are reflected in their reading habits.

The students in this study were selected because they rated themselves as having a low or poor attitude toward reading. Their interview responses however, revealed that they recognized the long term values of reading in attaining a job, learning how to do something, and as part of the communication process. Their reading habits reflected the appreciation of the values of reading in that the students reported reading class assignments. However, these students found ways to shorten the amount of reading they actually completed by skimming the material or dividing the reading with peers. Few of the students carried reading materials with them. They were also more likely to read a magazine, computer, or newspaper article than a novel.

Implications

Several implications emerged from the review of the literature and the findings of this study. The review of the literature showed that, thus far, research points to the theory that if the middle school philosophy is effectively implemented, students are actively engaged in the learning process and students' achievement increases. Students in this study told us that they chose not to read because they wanted freedom of selection, lacked time, and desired peer relationships. Specifically, the emergent implications of this study are:

1. If students will read more when given freedom to select, it would behoove educators to provide more freedom to select. Educators might consider

allowing students more freedom to select what they read and what format they use. Each student has a different idea of what they consider to be interesting reading material. A menu approach to assignments might allow students to have options about what assignments they do and the order in which they complete the items. In this way, the students have the freedom to select how they meet the standard or objective.

2. If students do not read because they do not have time, it might make sense for educators to find ways to maximize the amount of in-school time when students are actively engaged in reading. Most components of a student's life are beyond the control of the educator. But the educator does have the capacity to provide more available class time for reading. Educators might create blocks of time that better allow for active student engagement through such techniques as integrating subject matter, team teaching, and block scheduling. These are organizational issues that allow educators to access the time students need to develop "flow" experiences. For example, a social studies, English, and reading teacher, could access a larger block of time where students would read about and write about integral concepts important in all three content areas. The library would then become the "hub" of such a system. Students could freely enter the library to access information in a variety of formats, at a variety of reading levels.

Taking this implication a step further, educators might wish to take learning beyond the walls of the school building and enter the community.

Students might enter into apprenticeships where more authentic learning would occur and content would be learned within the context of the work world as students needed the information. The school might become a resource center where educators would be available to assist students in accessing the information and/or resources they needed to further their learnings. Students would have freedom in selecting what they would read, when they would read it, and if and how they might work with a friend. Time would be limited by their apprenticeship schedule, not Carnegie units.

3. If students are more responsive when working in social situations, educators might consider finding ways for students to work more collegially. Educators may want to consider recreating the atmosphere of their classrooms so that easy interactions among students would be encouraged. Classrooms might begin to resemble living rooms or dens, with furniture that would be conducive to conversations or curling up with a book. Tables might be more inviting for small group projects.

Beyond the physical arrangement of the room, educators may wish to consider opportunities for students to work together. Students within a classroom may learn more effective ways to engage in a cooperative manner. This might expand to include learning opportunities with multi-age groups, or perhaps even multi-generational groups. Advantages of students entering into an apprenticeship experience and the opportunities that situation offers might include multi-generational learning.

4. If educators are to effectively implement innovative practices identified in the literature within their classrooms, administrators would need to support those efforts with a variety of resources including professional development efforts in cognitive constructivism, the middle school philosophy, strategies for implementing the whole language philosophy, and collegial support for team members. Administrators might support the above efforts by encouraging teachers to develop study groups, mentoring programs, and peer coaching opportunities. These professional development efforts may be best supported through the allocation of time and money.

Stiggins (1997) asserts that teachers must be knowledgeable in their field to be effective teachers. He defines knowledgeable as "being able to understand it [the subject matter] inside and out" (p. 61). In the context of this study, it is important that teachers know what quality literature is available and how students can access that literature. Unfortunately, this is not the reality of many of our schools.

Suggestions for Teachers or Adults

The students in this study had several suggestions for adults. These suggestions fell into two basic categories. First, they gave suggestions about how to help kids improve their reading skills and second, they had suggestions about how to help reading be more enjoyable. These suggestions are based solely on the input of the students. Therefore, care should be taken when interpreting these suggestions. These students do not have benefits of the

pedagogical background of educators or the life experiences of adults. They are susceptible to impulsivity or to issues of providing their perception of the "right answer" or what they believe the interviewer wants to hear.

To improve skills

The most frequent suggestion students mentioned was to have them read more. Avery, Ben, Carl, David, Forrest, Henry, Ken, Mike, Ned, Oliver, Penny, Quentin, Robert, Eugene, and Victor all recommended encouraging kids to read, so that they would get more practice. More practice reading, they believed, would make the students better readers. Closely related to that response, Ben, Carl, James, Eugene, and Victor suggested that there should be more reading assignments. Ben went on to say, "If it's an assignment we'd have to get it done." When asked if they would read more if teachers assigned more reading, fourteen of the students responded , "Yes, they would read more if it was assigned." Only Ken and Theresa said they would not read more, even if it was assigned. The other seven students didn't give a direct response to that inquiry.

"Teach them more words" was the next most frequent suggestion for helping kids to become better readers. For Ian, Laura, Ned, Robert, and Theresa teaching them "more words" referred to helping them with the pronunciations of words and explaining what the words meant. Ian, Theresa, and Victor suggested that kids need to learn to say more words. As Ian commented, "You'll get more familiar with the words and next time you see it you'll know." Laura, Theresa, and Wilma also indicated a need to know more

and bigger compound words. Wilma suggested, "[Teachers] could help me figure out how to read harder things. I just have to learn different words and then I could use them."

Emily, Henry, Ian, James, Ken, Oliver, and Penny felt adults should read to kids when they were little. Emily stated, "It would have a positive effect on them I guess, if they learned that reading is good."

Oliver and Victor suggested that the way to help students become better readers was to put more libraries in towns. Avery and James agreed that providing access to books was the key to improving student reading. Avery suggested, "Get funds for schools so everyone will have books." James said, "Parents should buy their kids books. If kids have books around in their free time, maybe they will pick them up and read them."

Emily suggested that to help kids improve their reading skills, "You have to give teachers bigger salaries so they will want to give more encouragement, to encourage children." Emily suggested, "That instead of giving them [students] an assignment and say this is due in two days or two weeks or something, why don't you like all do it together, you know, do different kinds of activities. Make it fun." Quentin suggested that there was nothing teachers or other adults could do to help him become a better reader. He stated, "I have to do it on my own."

These students thought it would help them improve their reading skill if adults would have students do more reading. They believed that more reading

practice would result in improved reading skills. Most of the students said they would read more if more reading was assigned. Another suggestion they had for adults was that they needed to teach more words, which translated into increased vocabulary development. These suggestions centered on teaching both decoding skills and the meaning of the words. The students felt adults should read to kids more when they were young and that it was important for students to have easy access to reading materials.

Make reading more enjoyable

To help make reading more enjoyable, the students provided suggestions that fit into four primary categories. Those categories included: (a) providing books of interest to young teens, (b) permitting them choices in what they read and when they read it, (c) providing previews of books to help students select books, and (d) providing reward systems that encourage reading.

The most frequent suggestion to make reading more enjoyable was to provide books of interest to students. James stated, "Have them [adults] find out what kind of book they [students] like and then give them plenty of that." Fifteen of the other students (Carl, Emily, Forrest, Gwen, Henry, Ian, Laura, Mike, Ned, Penny, Quentin, Susan, Eugene, Victor, and Wilma) agreed and referred to the need to access "better" stories, although they had a variety of opinions about what made a story "better". Mike simply stated, "Just try to make the books more interesting, about what [subject] they [students] like."

Ned said, "adults need to make better books, not so much corny, I guess. Not like little kid books, just regular reality topics." Laura added, "Reading adult books is not that much fun, because they try to write about kids and it's not usually right because they aren't kids and so they don't know what they are writing about. They just try to guess how kids are and how they act, but they're usually way off. So it's better when kids write about it, because they know from experience because they're kids. So you can relate more to kid books than you can to adult books." Wilma concluded, "There should be more books about things we like to read."

Twelve of the 23 students (Carl, Emily, Gwen, Henry, Ian, James, Laura, Penny, Quentin, Susan, Eugene, and Wilma) expressed the desire for freedom to select what they read and when they read it. Emily suggested, "You shouldn't push people into reading. If they want to read, let them read." Gwen concurred, "Kids don't like it if it's [reading] pressured on to them. Like the teachers saying open your book and read. [Kids] don't want to read it 'cause you're pressuring it on them. You should let them read what they want to read or give them choices of what they want to read." Ian said, "If [kids] can choose which ones they like, they don't get bored. They won't have to just sit and read something they don't like to read. Instead, they could enjoy the book."

James, Penny, Robert, Theresa, and Wilma felt kids would read more if adults could just tell kids about the book before they read it. "That way they won't waste their time reading half a story and then find out they don't like it,"

suggested Robert. Avery, Emily, and James thought it would help if teachers would help students find books they might like. Avery commented, "Give me opinions on what books I should read." Emily added, "I need to learn how to find books that I like." James suggested, "It would be faster and you wouldn't have to look for a book."

Henry and Robert suggested that if teachers gave extra credit points kids would read a lot more. Oliver felt that adults should "try to get more programs going like that 'Book It' program so they can have a reward so it would make them [kids] want to read." Emily and Theresa thought it would help if kids did more activities, maybe played a game and got rewards. Avery believed there should be "programs where [kids] could read with a friend or something like that. They will read with their friends, but not by themselves."

Oliver suggested, "If they came out with like a really good movie and they had a book about it, maybe that'd motivate me to read a little bit. But they [the movies] are never the same, because you get a mental picture of what the characters are like and stuff because you don't have pictures, and then when they make the movie it's like totally different than what your mental picture is and it kind of disappoints you or frustrates you."

To make reading more fun, these students suggested that adults provide kids with books that kids can relate to and that are of interest to them. They believed that adults need to help acquaint students with these books. The students got frustrated looking for books that appealed to them. They felt that

adults could expedite the selection process by providing students with a short synopsis or commercial about the book. Students wanted choices in what they were going to read and when they were going to read it. As Wilma said, "Usually I will get into a book and something will happen and I can't read for a while. Then I can't get back into the book, so I have to read it at one time."

Summary

Students made suggestions that can be summarized in two phrases: (a) ways to help kids improve their reading skills, and (b) ways to make reading more fun for kids. I further divided each of these two categories into four areas. Students suggested that in order for reading skills to improve they [students] need to: (a) read more, (b) expand their vocabularies, (c) be read to when they are young, and (d) have ready access to reading materials. In order to have reading be more fun, students suggested that they need to: (a) have reading materials that are of interest to them, (b) have the freedom to select what they read, and when they read; (c) have adults provide previews of books the students might want to read, and (d) have reward systems that encourage reading.

Recommendations for Further Research

Further exploration is warranted to investigate a comparison of students who are capable of reading and continue to read with those who are capable of reading but choose not to read. If there are certain characteristics or background factors common to one group but not the other, it might be possible

to predict which students are at-risk to quit reading. If we could identify these students early enough, it might be possible to develop interventions that would encourage them to continue reading.

Further exploration is also warranted to follow students throughout their school career in a longitudinal study. This type of research could provide insights into factors common to a group of students who do choose to read as compared to a group of students who are alliterate. If these students were part of the same class, they would have similar educational experiences, which would allow exploration of how different students react differently in the same environment.

Researchers might wish to study teachers who have vastly different philosophical perspectives. An examination of how students react to the different philosophical perspectives would broaden the available knowledge base. A slightly different view would be attained by examining a teacher's instructional practices, exposing him/her to professional development aimed at helping the educator amend their philosophical base, noting changes made in classroom practices, and then determining the impact on students' desire to read.

Are there students in classrooms where the constructivist philosophy is effectively implemented that still choose not to read? An exploration of the characteristics and background experiences of those students would broaden the available knowledge base. A study of the academic and social achievement

of students in a classroom where the constructivist philosophy is effectively implemented and students in a more traditional classroom would provide a comparison that might point out the benefits and weaknesses of each philosophy.

Research on home influences of students who are capable of reading but choose not to read would be beneficial to the educational community. There is little doubt that the environment in which students live impacts their academic learning. Morrow (1985, 1983) has explored this issue at the preschool and elementary level, but I was unable to locate similar research about the home influences at the middle school level.

This study focused on students in a public school setting. Would students who are home schooled or in a private school setting react differently than these students? If so, what variables caused the difference? A case study taking a more in-depth look at alliterate students would also add to the available knowledge base.

References

Alexander, W., & McEwin, C.K. (1989). Schools in the middle: Status and progress. Columbus, OH: National Middle School Association.

Ames, C., & Archer, J. (1988). Achievement goals in the classroom: Students' learning strategies and motivation processes. Journal of Educational Psychology, 80, 260-267.

Anderson, M.A., Tollefson, N.A., & Gilbert, E.C. (1985). Giftedness and reading: A cross-sectional view of differences in reading attitudes and behaviors. Gifted Child Quarterly, 29, 186-189.

Anderson, R.C., Wilson, P.T., & Fielding, L.G. (1988). Growth in reading and how children spend their time outside of school. Reading Research Quarterly, 23(3), 285-303.

Assor, A., & Connell, J.P. (1992). The validity of students' self-reports as measures of performance affecting self-appraisals. In D.H. Schunk, & J.L. Meece, (Eds.), Student perceptions in the classroom (pp. 25-47). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Atwell, N. (1998). In the middle: New understandings about writing, reading, and learning. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.

Azar, B. (1996). Schools: The source of rough transitions. APA Monitor, June, 14.

Benson, P.L. (1996). Developmental assets among Minneapolis youth: The urgency of promoting healthy community. Minneapolis: Search Institute.

Bernstein, A.C. (1998). The age of embarrassment. In A.M. Meehan, & E. Astor-Stetson (Eds.), Adolescent psychology 98/99 (pp. 22-23). Sluice Dock, CT: Dushkin/McGraw-Hill.

Bettelheim, G., & Zelan, K. (1982). On learning to read: The child's fascination with meaning. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Bintz, W.P. (1993). Resistant readers in secondary education: Some insights and implications. Journal of Reading, 36(8), 604-615.

Boorstin, D. (1984). Letters of transmittal. In Books in our future. Washington, DC: Joint Committee on the Library.

Borg, W.R., & Gall, M.D. (1989). Educational research: An introduction. White Plains, NY: Longman.

Brooks, M.G., & Brooks, J.G. (1999). The courage to be constructivist. Educational Leadership, 57(3), 18-24.

Brown, B.B. (1990). Peer groups and peer cultures. In S.S. Feldman & G.R. Elliot (Eds.), At the threshold: The developing adolescent (171-196). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Caine, R.N., & Caine, G. (1994). Making connections: Teaching and the human brain. Menlo Park, CA: Addison-Wesley

Caissy, G.A. (1994). Early adolescence: Understanding the 10 to 15 year old . New York: Insight Books.

Calfee, R. & Drum, P. (1986). Research on teaching reading. In M.C. Wittrock (Ed.), Handbook of research on teaching (3rd ed.). New York: Macmillan.

Campbell, J.R., Donahue, P.L., Reese, C.M., & Phillips, G.W. (1996). National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)1994 reading report card for the nation and the states. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Government Printing Office.

Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development. (1989). Turning points: Preparing American youth for the 21st century. New York: The Carnegie Corporation of New York. (Ed 312 322)

Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development. (1992). A matter of time: Risk and opportunity in the nonschool hours. Washington, DC: Carnegie Corporation.

Carpenter W.A. (2000). Ten years of silver bullets: Dissenting thoughts on education reform. Phi Delta Kappan, 81(5), 383-389.

Chall, J.S. (1967). Learning to read: The great debate. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Clary, L.M. (1991). Getting adolescents to read. Journal of Reading, 34, 340-345.

Conner, D.V. (1954). The relationship between reading achievement and voluntary reading of children. Educational Review, 6, 221-227.

Copperman, P. (1978). The literacy hoax. New York: William Morrow.

Cowan, P.A. (1978). Piaget with feeling: Cognitive, social and emotional dimensions. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Creswell, J.W. (1998). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cronbach, L.J. (1975). Beyond the two disciplines of scientific psychology. American Psychologist, 30, 116-127.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). Flow: The psychology of optimal experience. New York: Harper Collins.

Csikszentmihaly, M., & Larson, R. (1984). Being adolescent: Conflict and growth in the teenage years. New York: Basic Books.

Daniels, H., Zemelman, S., & Bizar, M. (1999). Whole language works: Sixty years of research. Educational Leadership, 57(2), 32-37.

D'Arcangelo, M. (1999). Learning about learning to read: A conversation with Sally Shaywitz. Educational Leadership, 57(2), 26-31.

Denham, C., & Lieberman, A. (Eds.). (1980). Time to learn. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Duchein, M.A., & Mealey, D.L. (1993). Remembrance of books past. . .Long past: Glimpses into aliteracy. Reading Research and Instruction, 33(1), 13-28.

Early, M. (1984). Reading to learn in grades 5 to 12. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Eccles, J.S., & Midgley, C. (1988). Stage/environment fit: Developmentally appropriate classrooms for early adolescents. In R.E. Ames, & C. Ames, (Eds.), Research on motivation in education. New York: Academic Press.

Eichhorn, D. (1966). The middle school. New York: The Center for Applied Research.

Elkind, D. (1967). Egocentrism in adolescence. Childhood Development 38(4), 1025-1034.

Estes, T.H. (1971). A scale to measure attitudes toward reading. Journal of Reading, 15, 135-138.

Flesch, R. (1981). Why Johnny still can't read? New York: Harper & Row.

Fountas, I.C., & Pinnell, G.S. (1996). Guided reading: Good first teaching for all children. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Fry, D.D., & Jobe, M.E. (1996). Importance and implementation of middle school concepts: A study of east Texas middle school principals. ERS Spectrum, Winter, 31-36.

Fuligni, A.J. (3-16-00). Secondary education in the life of american adolescents. [On-line]. Available: http://www.ed.gov/pubs/Research5/UnitedStates/secondary.html

Gallik, J.D. (1999). Do they read for pleasure? Recreational reading habits of college students. Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 42(6), 480-488.

Gambrell, L.B., Palmer, B.M., Codling, R.M., & Mazzoni, S.A. (1996). Assessing motivation to read. The Reading Teacher, 49, 518-533.

George, P., & Lawrence, G. (1982). Handbook for middle school teaching. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, and Co.

George, P.S., & Shewey, K. (1994). New evidence for the middle school. Columbus, OH: National Middle School Association.

George, P.S., Stevenson, C., Thomason, J., & Beane, J. (1992). The middle school–And beyond. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Gibson, J.T. (1978). The middle school concept: "An albatross?" Journal of Teacher Education, 29(5), 17-19.

Goodlad, J. (1984). A place called school. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Goodman, K. (1986). What's whole in whole language? Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Goodman, K.S., & Goodman, Y.M. (1979). Learning to read is natural. In L.B. Resnick & P.A. Weaver (Eds.), Theory and practice of early reading (Vol. L). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Grantes, J., Noyce, C., Patterson, F., & Robertson, J. (1961). The junior high school we need. Washington, DC: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Greaney, V. (1980). Factors related to amount and type of leisure time reading. Reading Research Quarterly, 15(3), 337-357.

Gruhn, W., & Douglass, H. (1947). The modern junior high school. New York: The Ronald Press.

Heathington, B.S., & Alexander, J.E. (1984). Do classroom teachers emphasize attitudes toward reading? The Reading Teacher, 37, 484-488.

Holloway, J.H. (1999). Caution: Constructivism ahead. Educational Leadership, 57(3), 85-86.

Huck, C.S., Hepler, S., Hickman, J., & Kiefer, B.Z. (1997). Children's literature in the elementary school (6th Ed.). Boston, MA: McGraw Hill.

Irving, A. (1980). Promoting voluntary reading for children and young people. Paris: UNESCO.

Johns, J.D. (1978). Motivating reluctant readers. Journal of Research and Development, 11 (3), 69-74.

Johnson-Kuby, S.A., & Katz, C.A. (1996). Return of the vampire. Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 40(2), 144-149.

Kohn, A. (1995). Discipline is the problem–not the solution. Learning, 24(3), 34.

Kvale, S. (1996). Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Langer, J.A., Applebee, A.N., Mullis, I.V., & Foertsch, M.A. (1990). Learning to read in our nation's schools: Instruction and achievement in 1988 in grades 4, 8, and 12 (CS 010 130). Princeton, NJ: National Assessment of Educational Progress. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 227 442)

Lehr, F. (1982). Identifying and assessing reading attitudes. Journal of Reading, 26, 80-83.

Ley, T.C., Schaer, B.B., & Dismukes, B.W. (1994). Longitudinal study of the reading attitudes and behaviors of middle school students.Reading Psychology, 15, 11-38.

Lincoln, Y.S., & Guba, E.G. (1985). Naturalistic inquiry. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Logan, F.A., & Gordon, W.C. (1981). Fundamentals of learning and motivation. Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown.

Lounsbury, J.H. (Ed.). (1982). This we believe. Columbus, OH: National Middle School Association. (ED 226 513)

Lynch, M., & Cicchetti, D. (1997). Children's relationships with adults and peers: An examination of elementary and junior high school students. Journal of School Psychology, 35 (1), 81-99.

MacDonald, B., & Walker, R. (1977). Case study and the social philosophy of educational research. In D. Hamilton (Ed.), Beyond the numbers game. London: Macmillan Education.

Manning, M.L. (1998). Developmentally appropriate middle level schools. In A.M. Meehan, & E. Astor-Stetson,(Eds.), Adolescent psychology 98/99 (pp. 46-48). Sluice Dock, CT: Dushkin/McGraw-Hill.

Martin, P. (1991). Reader/leaders: Exploring the why. English Journal, 80(6), 47-53.

Matson, B. (1996). Whole language or phonics? Teachers and researchers find the middle ground most fertile. The great reading debate. Harvard Education Letter, 12(2), 1-5.

McBrien, J.L., & Brandt, R.S. (1997). The language of learning: A guide to education terms. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

McEady-Gillead, B. (1989). The leisure time of interested and uninterested readers. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Reading Association (34th, New Orleans, LA, April 30-May 4, 1989). (ED 314719)

McKenna, M.C., Kear, D.J., & Ellsworth, R.A. (1995). Children's attitudes toward reading: A national survey. Reading Research Quarterly, 30, 934-957.

Meece, J., Blumenfeld, P., & Hoyle, R. (1988). Students' goal orientations and cognitive engagement in classroom activities. Journal of Educational Psychology, 80, 514-523.

Meehan, A.M., & Astor-Stetson, E. (Eds.), (1998). Adolescent psychology 98/99. Sluice Dock, CT: Dushkin/McGraw-Hill.

Mellon, C.A. (1990). Leisure reading choices of rural teens. School Library Media Quarterly, Summer, 223-228.

Merriam, S.B. (1988). Case study research in education: A qualitative approach. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Moffitt, M.A.S., & Wartella, E. (1992). Youth and reading: A survey of leisure reading pursuits of female and male adolescents. Reading Research and Instruction, 31 (2), 1-17.

Moldenhauer, D.L., & Miller, W.H. (1980). Television and reading achievement. Journal of Reading, 23, 615-619.

Morrow, L.M. (1983). Home and school correlates of early interest in literature. Journal of Educational Research, 76(4), 221-230.

Morrow, L.M. (1985). Attitudes of teachers, principals, and parents toward promoting voluntary reading in the elementary school. Reading Research and Instruction, 25(2), 116-130.

Morrow, L.M. (1986). Voluntary reading: Forgotten goal. The Educational Forum, 50(2), 159-167.

Morrow, L.M. (1992). The impact of a literature-based program on literacy achievement, use of literature, and attitudes of children from minority backgrounds. Reading Research Quarterly, 27(3), 250-276.

Morrow, L.M., O'Connor, E., & Smith, J.K. (1990). Effects of a story reading program on the literacy development of at risk kindergarten children. Journal of Reading Behavior, 22, 255-275.

Moustakas, C. (1994). Phenomenological research methods. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

National Commission on Time and Learning. (1994). Prisoners of time. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). (1981). Reading, thinking, and writing: Results from the 1979-80 national assessment of reading and literature. Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 209 641)

National Middle School Association (NMSA). (1982). This we believe. Columbus, OH: Author. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 226 513)

National Middle School Association (NMSA). (1992). This we believe. Columbus, OH: Author. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 226 513)

National Middle School Association (NMSA). (1995). This we believe: Developmentally responsive middle level schools. Columbus, OH: Author. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 390 546)

National Research Council (1998). Executive summary: Preventing reading difficulties in young children. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Newman, J.M. (Ed.) (1985). Whole language: Theory in use. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Nystrand, M., & Gamoran, A. (1991). Instructional discourse, student engagement, and literature achievement. Research in the Teaching of English, 25, 261-290.

Office of Educational Research and Improvement. (1992). Meeting goal 3: How well are we doing? Washington, DC: Office of Research. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 352 397)

Owens, R.G. (1995). Organizational behavior in education. New York: Allyn & Bacon.

Palmer, B.M., Codling, R.M., & Gambrell, L.B. (1994). In their own words: What elementary students have to say about motivation to read. The Reading Teacher, 48 (2), 176-179.

Perkins, D. (1999). The many faces of constructivism. Educational Leadership, 57(3), 6-11.

Peterson, M.D. (Ed.) (1984). Jefferson. New York: Literary Classics of the United States.

Pikulski, J.J. (1991). The transition years: Middle school. In J. Flood, J.M. Jenson, D. Lapp, & J.R. Squire, (Eds.), Handbook of research on teaching the English arts. New York: Macmillan.

Pintrich, P.R., & DeGroot, E.V. (1990). Motivational and self-regulated learning components of classroom academic performance. Journal of Educational Psychology, 82 (1), 33-40.

Rinehart, S.D., Gerlach, J.M., & Wisell, D.L. (1998). Would I like to read this book?: Eighth graders' use of book cover clues to help choose recreational reading. Reading Research and Instruction, 37(4), 263-279.

Rosenshine, B., & Stevens, R. (1984). Classroom instruction in reading. In P.D. Pearson (Ed.), Handbook of reading research (pp. 745-798). New York: Longman.

Rubin, H.J., & Rubin, I.S. (1995). Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Sergiovanni, T.J. (1992). Moral leadership: Getting to the heart of school improvement. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Shapiro, J., & White, W. (1991). Reading attitudes and perceptions in traditional and nontraditional reading programs. Reading Research & Instruction, 30, 52-66.

Shapiro, J., & Whitney, P. (1997). Factors involved in the leisure reading of upper elementary school students. Reading Psychology: An International Quarterly, 18, 343-370.

Sharon, A.T. (1974). What do adults read? Reading Research Quarterly, 9, 148-169.

Skinner, B.F. (1987). Upon further reflection. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Smith, F. (1976). Learning to read by reading. Language Arts, 53, 297-322.

Spielberger, C.D. (Ed.). (1972). Anxiety: Current trends in theory and research (Vols. 1 & 2). New York: Academic Press.

Spradley, J.P. (1979). The ethnographic interview. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Steinberg, L. (1990). Autonomy, conflict, and harmony in the family relationship. In S.S. Feldman & G.R. Elliott (Eds.). At the threshold: The developing adolescent (pp. 255-276). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Steinberg, L., Brown, B., & Dornbush, S.M. (1996). Beyond the classroom: Why school reform has failed and what parents need to do. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Stiggins, R.J. (1997). Student-centered classroom assessment. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Strauss, A.M., & Corbin, J. (1990). Basics of qualitative research. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Taylor, B.M., Frye, P.J., & Maruyama, G.M. (1990). Time spent reading and reading growth. American Educational Research Journal, 27, 351-362.

Teale, W.H., & Lewis, R. (1981). The nature and measurement of secondary school students' attitudes toward reading, Reading Horizons, 21, 94-102.

Traw, R. (1993). Nothing in the middle: What middle schoolers are reading. (ED 384 864)

Valtin, R. (1984). The development of metalinguistic abilities in children learning to read and write. In J. Downing & R. Valtin (Eds.), Language awareness and learning to read. New York: Springer-Verlag.

Weinstein, A.S., Marshall, H.H., Sharp, L., & Bolkin, M. (1987). Pygmalion and the student: Age and classroom differences in children's awareness of teacher expectations. Child Development, 58, 1079-1093.

Wigfield, A. (1997). Children's motivations for reading and reading engagement. In J.T. Guthrie, & A. Wigfield, (Eds.), Reading engagement: Motivating readers through integrated instruction. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Wigfield, A., & Guthrie, J.T. (1997). Motivation for reading: An overview. Educational Psychologist, 32(2), 57-58.

Wlodkowski, R.J. (1977). Motivation. Washington, DC: National Education Association.

Wood, K.D., & Jones, J.P. (1997). When affect informs instruction. Childhood Education, 73(5), 292-296.

Worthy, J., Moorman, M., & Turner, M. (1999). What Johnny likes to read is hard to find in school. Reading Research Quarterly, 34(1), 12-27.

Appendixes

Appendix A

Motivation to Read Profile - Reading Scale
Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni (1996)

1. My friends think I am _____.
   A.) a very good reader
   B.) a good reader.
   C.) an OK reader.
   D.) a poor reader.

2. Reading a book is something I like to do.
   A.) Never
   B.) Not very often
   C.) Sometimes
   D.) Often

3. I read _____.
   A.) not as well as my friends.
   B.) about the same as my friends.
   C.) a little better than my friends.
   D.) a lot better than my friends.

4. My best friends think reading is _____.
   A.) really fun.
   B.) fun.
   C.) OK to do.
   D.) no fun at all.

5. When I come to a word I don't know, I can _____.
   A.) almost always figure it out.
   B.) sometimes figure it out.
   C.) almost never figure it out.
   D.) never figure it out.

6. I tell my friends about good books I read.
   A.) I never do this.
   B.) I almost never do this.
   C.) I do this some of the time.
   D.) I do this a lot.

7. When I am reading by myself, I understand _____.
   A.) almost everything I read
   B.) some of what I read
   C.) almost none of what I read
   D.) none of what I read

8. People who read a lot are _____.
   A.) very interesting.
   B.) interesting.
   C.) not very interesting.
   D.) boring.

9. I am _____.
   A.) a poor reader.
   B.) an OK reader.
   C.) a good reader.
   D.) a very good reader.

10. I think libraries are _____.
   A.) a great place to spend time.
   B.) an interesting place to spend time.
   C.) an OK place to spend time.
   D.) a boring place to spend time.

11. I worry about what other kids think about my reading _____.
   A.) every day.
   B.) almost every day.
   C.) once in a while.
   D.) never.

12. Knowing how to read well is _____.
   A.) not very important.
   B.) sort of important.
   C.) important.
   D.) very important.

13. When my teacher asks me a question about what I have read, I _____.
   A.) can never think of an answer.
   B.) have trouble thinking of an answer.
   C.) sometimes think of an answer.
   D.) always think of an answer.

14. I think reading is _____.
    A.) a boring way to spend time.
    B.) an OK way to spend time.
    C.) an interesting way to spend time.
    D.) a great way to spend time.

15. Reading is _____.
    A.) very easy for me.
    B.) kind of easy for me.
    C.) kind of hard for me.
    D.) very hard for me.

16. When I grow up I will spend _____.
    A.) none of my time reading.
    B.) very little of my time reading.
    C.) some of my time reading.
    D.) a lot of my time reading.

17. When I am in a group talking about stories, I _____.
    A.) almost never talk about my ideas.
    B.) sometimes talk about my ideas.
    C.) almost always talk about my ideas.
    D.) always talk about my ideas.

18. I would like for my teacher to read books out loud to the class _____.
    A.) every day.
    B.) almost every day.
    C.) once in a while.
    D.) never.

19. When I read out loud I am a _____.
    A.) poor reader.
    B.) OK reader.
    C.) good reader.
    D.) very good reader.

20. When someone gives me a book for a present, I feel _____.
    A.) very happy.
    B.) sort of happy.
    C.) sort of unhappy.
    D.) unhappy.

Appendix B
Additonal Items

21. I learn best by _____.
    a. **hearing**
    b. **seeing**
    c. both **hearing and seeing**
    d. **doing**
    e. I don't know

22. My mother's highest grade of schooling is _____.
    a. less than High School
    b. High School or have GED
    c. some college
    d. 4 year college degree or more
    e. I don't know

23. My father's highest grade of schooling is _____.
    a. less than High School
    b. High School or have GED
    c. some college
    d. 4 year college degree or more
    e. I don't know

24. How many children (birth to 18) live in your home now?
    a. 0
    b. 1
    c. 2
    d. 3 or more

25. Learning to read was easy.
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. I don't remember

26. When I was little somebody read to me.
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. I don't remember

27. People at my house read _____.
    a. Nearly every day
    b. 2-3 days a week
    c. Once a week
    d. never

Appendix C

Human Subjects Research Review

October 1998

Dear Student and Parent /Guardian:

I am currently involved in a research project exploring why some middle school students choose to read while others choose not to read. The project is designed to compare characteristics and background experiences of students who choose to read and students who choose not to read. I will be looking for patterns that help identify why students make the choices they do and how educators can influence these decisions. This study is performed as partial fulfillment of the requirements for my Ed.D. in Educational Leadership at Drake University.

Your participation in this project will provide useful information on this topic. Students in seventh and eighth grades completed a survey indicating how they perceived their ability to read and how important reading was to them. Approximately one fourth of the students in the class were identified as being capable readers who choose not to read. These students are now being asked to complete a personal interview with me. The individual interviews will take approximately 15 minutes to complete, and ask students to expand on the information gathered on the surveys. The sessions will be taped. Sample questions include: What do you remember about learning to read? What was the last book you read? What do you choose to do in your free time?

Participation in this study is strictly voluntary. Students may withdraw from the study at any point without penalty and even if their parents have granted permission. Participation is not associated with any class grade. No compensation is being offered for participation in the study. All data from this project are confidential and will be used for research purposes only.

Please complete the bottom portion of this form and return it to your Language Arts/ Reading teacher ASAP. You may keep the top section of this form for your own information. Thank you for your assistance.

Pam Ries
319-695-3954 (Home)
515-472-3414 (Work)

Date_____

I agree to participate in the Reading Engagement research project. I agree to answer honestly and understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time.

_____ _____

Student Signature Parent / Guardian Signature

Date sent: **Thu, 22 Oct 1998 16:14:54 -0500**
From: **Bob King <kingb@aea15.k12.ia.us>**
To: **Riesp@aea15.k12.ia.us**
Subject: **Re: Research Project - Bob King**

Bob King wrote:

The Centerville Community Schools are very interested in helping Pam do her research study. We have offered to print the answer sheets and to score the student responses on our new Abacus software. We are currently working to figure out how to do this, and expect to have these problems solved by next Monday, October 26.

We are also looking forward to providing Pam substantial data concerning our students, and to assist her in having the site to do the student interviews.

We are very interested in reading her report, and will use it in program modifications to help us reduce the high drop out rates that have plagued our community for decades.

Our human resource committee fully endorsed Pam's proposal.

HSRR: 8/18/93

To be completed by the Investigator:

Date Submitted: 10-1-98

Proposal Title: What Middle School Reluctant Readers Say About Why They Choose Not to Read

Investigator: Pam Ries Telephone 319-395-3754

Faculty advisor: (for student research): Dr. Ann Curtiss Dept. Education-Ad

Return to: Pam Ries
Name

1335 Ironwood Ave.
Street Address of Campus Office

Packwood, IA 52580
City, State, Zip (if off campus)

To be completed by the Human Subjects Research Review Committee Chair:

Date received: 10-9-98

Decision:

_____ Approval, no risk

X Approval, minimum risk contingent on attached changes

_____ Approval, subjects at risk, but benefits outweigh risks

_____ No approval. Subjects at risk or proposal does not adequately address risks, benefits or procedures.

Reasons for Disapproval: _____

Suggested Changes: see attached sheet

HSRRC Chair: Jane Radeni

Date: 10-15-98

Final Notification Form

11/3/98

To: Pam Ries

From: Jane Rankin

Re: What Middle School Reluctant Readers Say About Why They Choose Not to Read

I received your revised materials Friday, and noted the changes that you had made in response to the HSRR committee's instructions. One remaining concern, which so far as I could tell was not addressed, was how parents or subjects could obtain a summary of the findings of your research if they wish to do so. A person to contact and a phone number or address so that parents can ask questions about the research and from which they can obtain the results should be provided on the informed consent sheet.

On behalf of the HSRR committee, I am approving the research, with the understanding that you will provide the parents or subjects a way to obtain additional information and a summary of the results if they want one, using the mechanism described above or another mechanism of your own devising.

Appendix D

Motivation to Read Profile
Conversational Interview
Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni (1996)

Name _____ Date _____

A. Emphasis: Narrative text

Suggested prompt (designed to engage student in a natural conversation): I have been reading a good book...I was talking with... about it last night. I enjoy talking about good stories and books that I've been reading. Today I'd like to hear about what you have been reading.

1. Tell me about the most interesting story book you have read this week (or even last week). Take a few minutes to think about it. (Wait time.) Now, tell me about the book or story.

    Probes: What else can you tell me? Is there anything else?

2. How did you know or find out about this story?

    A.) assigned; B.) chosen; C.) in school; D.) out of school

3. Why was this story interesting to you?

B. Emphasis: Informational text

Suggested prompt (designed to engage student in a natural conversation): Often we read to find out about something or to learn about something. We read for information. For example, I remember a student of mine...who read a lot of books about... to find out as much as he/she could about ... Now, I'd like to hear about some of the informational reading you have been doing.

1. Think about something important that you learned recently, not from your teacher and not from television, but from a book or some other reading material. What did you read about? (Wait time.) Tell me about what you learned.

    Probes: What else could you tell me? Is there anything else?

2. How did you know or find out about this book/article?
   A.) assigned; B.) chosen; C.) in school; D.) out of school

3. Why was this book (or article) important to you?

C. Emphasis: General reading

1. Did you read anything at home yesterday? What?

2. Do you have any books at school (in your desk/storage area/locker/book bag) today that you are reading? Tell me about them.

3. Tell me about your favorite author.

4. What do you think you have to learn to be a better reader?

5. Do you know about any books right now that you'd like to read? Tell me about them.

6. How did you find out about these books?

7. What are some things that get you really excited about reading books? Tell me about...

8. Who gets you really interested and excited about reading books? Tell me more about what they do.

APPENDIX E

My Conversational Interview
Based on: Motivation to Read Profile - Conversational Interview
Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni (1996)

Name _____Date _____

A. Emphasis: Narrative text

Suggested prompt: I have been reading a good book. I was talking with your teacher about it earlier. I enjoy talking about good stories and books that I've been reading. Today I'd like to hear about what you have been reading.

1. Tell me about the most interesting story/book you have read recently. Take a few minutes to think about it. (Wait time.) Now, tell me about the book or story.
   Probes: What else can you tell me? Is there anything else?

2. How did you know or find out about this story?
   A.) assigned; B.) chosen; C.) in school; D.) out of school

3. Why was this story interesting to you?

B. Emphasis: Informational text

Suggested prompt: Often we read to find out about something or to learn about something. We read for information. For example, I remember a student who read a lot of books about dinosaurs to find out as much as he could about dinosaurs. Now, I'd like to hear about some of the informational reading you have been doing.

1. Think about something important that you learned recently, not from your teacher and not from television, but from a book or some other reading material. What did you read about? (Wait time.) Tell me about what you learned.
   Probes: What else could you tell me? Is there anything else?

2. How did you know or find out about this book/article?
   A.) assigned; B.) chosen; C.) in school; D.) out of school

3. Why was this book (or article) important to you?

C. Emphasis: General reading

1. Did you read anything at home yesterday? What?

2. Do you have any books at school (in your desk/locker/book bag) today that you are reading? Tell me about them.

3. Tell me about your favorite author.

4. What do you think you have to learn to be a better reader? **OR** What makes you a good reader?

5. What do/could teachers do to help you be a better reader?

6. Do you know about any books right now that you'd like to read? Tell me about them.

7. How did you find out about these books?

8. What are some things that get you really excited about reading books? Tell me about...

9. Who gets you really interested and excited about reading books? Tell me more about what they do.

10. Who read to you when you were young? What did they read?

11. Do you like to sing? Play an instrument? Draw? Play sports?

12. What do you remember about learning to read?
    Prompts: Was it easy? Fun? How did you learn?

13. Do you remember any Nursery Rhymes? Did you ever know any nursery rhymes?

14. If you were in charge of the world, what would you do to help kids be better readers?

15. Do family members read at your house? What do they read - newspapers, books, magazines?

16. If you were in charge of the world, what would you do to help kids enjoy reading?

17. What do you like to do in your free time?

Thank you for your cooperation.